


# **Famine in Ukraine**

**1932-1933**

Edited by Roman Serbyn and  
Bohdan Krawchenko



The man-made famine of 1932-3 in Soviet Ukraine claimed the lives of millions of people. Yet it has remained veiled in obscurity. The Soviet authorities have continued to deny that a famine occurred. In the west, few outside the Ukrainian community and a narrow group of Soviet specialists had heard about this tragedy. Undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the lack of public awareness about the events of the famine has been the absence of a critical body of scholarship. This volume represents an attempt to rectify this problem.



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## 1932–1933

Edited by Roman Serbyn and  
Bohdan Krawchenko

Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton 1986

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## PREFACE

The man-made famine of 1932-3 in Soviet Ukraine claimed the lives of millions of people. Yet it has remained veiled in obscurity. The Soviet authorities have continued to deny that a famine occurred, admitting only that there was worldwide hunger in the early 1930s, which affected Ukraine just as it affected other parts of the world. In the West, until the fiftieth anniversary of the event in 1982-3, few outside the Ukrainian community and a narrow group of Soviet specialists had heard about this tragedy.

Undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the lack of public awareness about the events of the famine has been the absence of a critical body of scholarship. This volume represents an attempt to rectify this problem. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the study of the famine is in its infancy. There remain large gaps in our knowledge and, moreover, as will be seen in the essays below, scholars differ in their interpretations of some of the events. Nevertheless, the book examines many of the critical questions surrounding the famine of 1932-3.

It explores the following issues: the causes of the famine, sources of information about the event, the scope of population loss, the impact of the famine on Ukrainian society and the Western response. It also looks at the question of genocide, and whether the Ukrainian famine can be categorized with this term, and includes a comparative study of another event unfamiliar to most in the West, namely the 1921-3 famine in Ukraine, which in some respects was a "dress rehearsal" for its more devastating counterpart a decade later.

This volume consists of selected papers from a conference held at the Université du Québec à Montréal in 1983. The support of the above university, in addition to that of Concordia University, the Shevchenko Foundation, the Montreal Branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies made possible not only the conference, but also the appearance of this volume.

Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko,  
April 1986



# THE MAN-MADE FAMINE OF 1933 IN SOVIET UKRAINE

*James E. Mace*

The Ukrainian famine of 1933 is one of the most tragic and least understood events of this century. In spite of the fact that reliable information was published at the time, it has disappeared from the public consciousness so completely that it represents the most successful example of the denial of genocide by its perpetrators.

Our task today is essentially to establish in broad outline what took place half a century ago in the Ukrainian countryside. First, here is a sketch of the situation that led up to the famine.

At the end of the First World War, the dynastic structures which had long ruled Eastern and Central Europe crumbled, and the various nations of the area fought one another for political survival and territorial boundaries. The independent Ukrainian People's Republic, established in 1918, was unable to hold out against enemies on all sides and the 1921 Treaty of Riga sanctioned its partition between the Russian Bolsheviks, who had established the Ukrainian SSR, and the new Polish Republic, which ruled Western Ukraine until 1939. Widespread guerrilla warfare, dubbed "kulak banditry" in Soviet sources, dragged on for years.<sup>1</sup> The Ukrainian countryside, its reserves taken by Communist requisitioning agents, suffered famine in 1921. The Bolsheviks, realizing their inability to completely subjugate the society on which they imposed themselves, took a new path of compromise. In 1921 Lenin proclaimed the New Economic Policy (NEP), ending forced requisitions

of agricultural produce and basically agreeing to leave the village alone. In 1923 the policy of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization or, more literally, taking root) was proclaimed in an attempt to give the Soviet regimes imposed on the colonies of what had been the Russian Empire a veneer of national legitimacy.

*Korenizatsiia* meant actively recruiting non-Russians into the Soviet regime and exchanging its former hostility toward non-Russian cultures for a new policy of officially sponsoring their development. Belorussianization, Tatarization, Yiddishization, and so forth, were carried out during the 1920s. But no other version of *korenizatsiia* went so far or created so many problems for Moscow as did Ukrainization.<sup>2</sup>

Ukrainization provided great opportunities for committed Ukrainians to work to develop the culture of their nation. Led by the first president of the independent Ukrainian state and *doyen* of Ukrainian historians, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, many prominent political figures who had gone into exile now returned. In 1924 a declaration signed by sixty-six prominent Ukrainians was presented to the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine (CP(b)U). The "Declaration of the Sixty-Six" stated that, inasmuch as the Ukrainians were a nation of toilers (mainly peasants), their natural ally was the Russian proletariat of the cities, and only the Bolsheviks' hostility toward any manifestation of Ukrainianness had prevented the consummation of this natural alliance. Now that the Bolsheviks had repudiated their past errors by entering upon a path of Ukrainization, the declaration concluded, Ukrainians were willing to become loyal Soviet citizens.<sup>3</sup> The "Declaration of the Sixty-Six" had the character of a national covenant between the regime and the Ukrainian people, represented by those who had emerged as the nation's natural leaders in 1917.

The new policy provided tremendous gains for the Bolsheviks. The new state of affairs in Soviet Ukraine became extremely attractive to the inhabitants of Western Ukraine, where virtually all important Ukrainian political forces exhibited some degree of Sovietophilism.<sup>4</sup> The Fifth Congress of the Communist International, in its resolution on the national question in Central Europe and the Balkans, recognized the Ukrainian question as one of the most important questions facing Eastern Europe and mandated its solution by unifying those Ukrainian territories ruled by Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania with Soviet Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> Ukrainian irredentism appeared for a time to be the most promising factor which could allow the USSR to break through the *cordon sanitaire* on its Western border.

However, Ukrainization was also fraught with dangers for the Soviet leadership. It legitimized a measure of Ukrainian national consciousness within the Communist Party itself. Even the cultural revival which



Ukrainization had helped to make possible, the *rozstriliane vidrodzhennia* (literally, the rebirth which was executed, so called because of its abrupt and violent suppression by Stalin), created a strong centrifugal force in Soviet politics. After all, the Ukrainians had been told that now they had achieved national liberation; is it any wonder that they began to act like it by developing their national culture independently from Russia's? Within the CP(b)U strong Ukrainian voices were heard. The Ukrainian Commissar of Education, Oleksander Shumsky, demanded in 1925 that Soviet Ukraine's Communist Party and Soviet state be headed by Ukrainians. Mykola Khvylovy, the most popular Soviet Ukrainian writer of the day, demanded that Ukrainian culture emancipate itself from Russian influence and turn to Western Europe for models. Mykhailo Volobuiev, the official in charge of political education in Soviet Ukraine, in 1928 even published in the bimonthly organ of the CP(b)U Central Committee an extensive survey of Soviet Ukraine's economic position within the USSR, showing that Ukraine was as exploited as it had been under the tsars and demanding that Ukraine's economic development be directed from the Ukrainian capital of Kharkiv rather than from Moscow and that it should be responsive first of all to the economic needs of Ukraine.

Moscow was shocked that such arguments could be made by communists and insisted upon the condemnation of those who had stated them. Mykola Skrypnyk, an old Bolshevik of Ukrainian origin who had been sent to Ukraine as Lenin's personal representative in 1917, assisted in condemning these "national deviationists" and was rewarded in 1927 with the post of Ukrainian Commissar of Education, which he promptly transformed into a supercommissariat in charge of all matters relating to the nationality question in Ukraine. Ukrainization had by 1928 succeeded in strengthening the Ukrainian wing of the CP(b)U to the point that, when Stalin needed to assure himself of the CP(b)U's support against N. Bukharin, he allegedly made a deal with Skrypnyk to withdraw his client Lazar Kaganovich from the leadership of the CP(b)U. Skrypnyk quickly became the first among equals in the Soviet Ukrainian hierarchy, and he began to carry out most of what had been demanded by those he helped to condemn as deviationists. Under Skrypnyk, Soviet Ukraine came to play a role in Soviet politics similar to that played in the Soviet bloc by Poland in the early Gomulka years: it was that part of the larger entity most conscious of its distinctiveness, jealous of its prerogatives, and least willing to follow Moscow's lead in arranging its internal affairs.

The First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) entailed a transformation of Soviet society based upon the repudiation of the concessions made at the end of the civil war and the virtually complete destruction of civil society

through the so-called cultural revolution, forced collectivization of agriculture based upon the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class" (a singularly inappropriate euphemism, since people do not melt; they are killed), and rapid industrial development based upon a drastically lowered standard of living of the workers and peasants. Immediately following the "fulfillment" of the First Five-Year Plan came the famine, the abandonment of Ukrainization, and the revival of Russian nationalism and centralism under the rubric "Soviet patriotism." It is our contention that none of these three occurrences can be explained in isolation, that they are but facets of a single policy aimed at the reconstitution of the Soviet Union as the totalitarian successor of the Russian Empire.

The cornerstone of the five-year plan was the forced collectivization of agriculture based on the liquidation of the so-called kulaks. In order to understand how this was possible, we must realize that the surface "liberalism" of the 1920s was accompanied by the gradual penetration of the countryside. A reflection of the greater insecurity the regime felt in Ukraine was the retention of the *kombidy* (Committees of the Village Poor), which aided the regime during the civil war as what might best be described as anti-peasant peasant organizations composed of local villagers who were placed in power over their neighbours and rewarded with a portion of the grain they helped to seize for the state. While the *kombidy* were abolished in Russia in 1919, in Ukraine they were retained under the new name of *komnezamy* (*Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, Committees of Poor Peasants as they are generally known, or Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants) right down to 1933, in many instances exercising the powers and functions of village soviets until the spring of 1925.<sup>6</sup> Also, a policy of "dekulakization," entailing the seizure of "surplus" property coveted by members of the *komnezamy*, was carried out in Ukraine until the end of 1923. In the latter half of the 1920s the rural regime was "normalized" through the establishment of village soviets and the extension of the network of secret police informers (*seksoty*) to the village.<sup>7</sup> Thus, by the late 1920s the regime was in a far stronger position *vis à vis* the Ukrainian village than it had been at the beginning of the decade. While the early Soviet regime confronted the village as a foreign body, it gradually gained the means of identifying its real and potential enemies in the village. Dekulakization, as it was carried out at the end of 1929, in reality had very little to do with "class warfare." It meant the removal of the natural leaders of village life, the most industrious farmers. Indeed, the general process of levelling in the wake of the first dekulakization at the beginning of the decade ensured that a given peasant's prosperity or lack of it was based more on his own competence than upon any inherited social position of

property. Dekulakization in the late 1920s also meant the expropriation and exile of anyone considered suspect for his political beliefs or who had even shown the common decency of taking in a needy neighbour, since anyone who gave aid or shelter to one declared a kulak was also subject to dekulakization. Even the poorest individual could be threatened with expropriation as a "kulak henchman." Dekulakization thus meant the decapitation of the village by means of the removal of anyone capable of leading any sort of resistance.

It did not work. There was widespread resistance to collectivization, both in the form of the armed resistance of men and the so-called *babski bunty* (revolts of the babas) in which the village women ran the local "activists" out of the village and took back what had been taken from them, thereby abolishing the collective farm.<sup>8</sup> The collective farm was widely perceived to be a reinstitution of serfdom, a bringing back of the old estate system as it had existed before emancipation.<sup>9</sup> In truth, collectivization was extractive rather than productive: taking people's implements and livestock to the centre of the village and forcing them to plant and harvest in common did nothing to raise agricultural output, but it made it much easier for the state to take a greater share of the harvest directly from the floor of a single threshing room.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time the village was under siege, Ukraine's urban elites also came under attack. First of all, Stalin soon reneged on whatever agreement he might have made with Skrypnyk and began a Byzantine campaign to bring his Ukrainian counterpart down. This campaign began with an attack on one of Skrypnyk's most important political clients, Matvii Iavorsky, the ideological watchdog over Ukrainian historians, who was condemned in 1929 for treating the history of Ukraine as a distinct process, that is, for approaching Ukrainian history as a national history in its own right and not as a part of Russian history. The political implications of the move were ominous: if Ukraine did not have a history, then it was not a separate nation and ought not be treated as such.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, Skrypnyk's commissariat was criticized for its failures in the area of education, and a policy of creeping educational centralization began to encroach on his bureaucratic power base. Most importantly, the Ukrainian spiritual and secular intelligentsia came under attack in the wake of the 1929 "liquidation" of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church and the 1930 show trial of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine. The latter trial contained not only prominent members of the Orthodox hierarchy but also so many members of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences that entire institutes had to be closed down. The defendants were accused not only of plotting revolt but also of engaging in wrecking in cultural affairs by interpreting Ukrainian history in a certain way, advocating terminology and spelling

different from the Russian, and, in short, for having helped Ukrainian culture and scholarship develop autonomously.<sup>12</sup> This not only implied the destruction of the current that had accepted the cultural opportunities Soviet Ukraine had offered half a decade earlier and declared their loyalty to the regime on that basis, not only the destruction of the non-Communist national elites as such, but it was also clearly aimed at the Ukrainian Communist elite led by Skrypnyk, since Skrypnyk himself had been intimately involved in the cultural discussions and had often taken positions more "nationalistic" than some of those now denounced as saboteurs.<sup>13</sup>

However, Stalin must surely have realized that the defeat of a political opponent would be only a temporary victory, and he may well have decided to seek something much deeper, the destruction of the social basis of Ukrainian self-assertion. The Ukrainians had traditionally been a nation of peasants, and Stalin himself saw the nationality question as at bottom a question of the peasantry.<sup>14</sup> As early as 1930 one finds statements in the Soviet Ukrainian press that in Ukraine the collectivization of agriculture had a particular task, the elimination of the social basis of Ukrainian nationalism, which was perceived to consist in individual peasant agriculture. The famine of 1933 seems to have been above all an attempt to destroy the Ukrainian nation as a social organism and political factor within the Soviet Union.

Beginning in 1928, the villages of the Soviet Union had to go through annual procurement campaigns, during which the local activists were led by an outsider (in the Ukrainian case, usually a non-Ukrainian worker from the industrial Donets Basin) who had been issued a revolver and told to achieve 100 per cent of the quota for the village he was assigned.

As economic depression worsened in the West, agricultural prices dropped steeply in relation to those of manufactured goods. The Soviet Union, whose entire plan of industrial development was based upon using the profits from the export of agricultural produce to pay for capital goods imported from the West, found that a given machine cost far more grain than had previously been the case. This provided an important economic motive for intensifying the exploitation of the peasantry, and the late Vsevolod Holubnychy emphasized this as a cause of the famine.<sup>15</sup> But it does not explain the geography of the famine and thus is far from constituting an adequate explanation of what took place.

It seems likely that what happened in Kazakhstan in 1930 might well have suggested to Stalin that starvation could be put to political use. The Kazakhs, primarily herdsmen, had responded to enforced collectivization by slaughtering their livestock. Rather than extend them aid, the regime decided to teach them a lesson by letting them starve. So

many died that the 1939 Soviet census shows 21.9 per cent fewer Kazakhs in the USSR than there had been in 1926.<sup>16</sup> But resistance among them ceased. The lesson was obvious. Famine could be a highly effective weapon.

Ukraine's burden under the grain procurement plans was far greater than its share of the total Soviet harvest, and this would indicate that Stalin decided from the beginning to press the Ukrainians harder than he did the Russian peasantry. Although Moscow was well aware of the disorganized state of Ukrainian agriculture as a result of collectivization, Soviet Ukraine was obliged to deliver 2.3 times the amount of grain marketed in the best pre-collectivization year. The 1930 quota of 7.7 million tonnes of grain was met, and it represented a third of a total harvest of 23 million tonnes. Although Ukraine produced only 27 per cent of all grain harvested in the USSR, it was forced to supply 38 per cent of all grain procured. In 1931, despite a decline in sown area, Moscow kept the same quota of 7.7 million tonnes for Ukraine and insisted it be met even after it became apparent that the Ukrainian harvest had dropped to 18.3 million tonnes according to official figures, and almost 30 per cent of that was lost during the harvest. Even at this time, a conscious policy of leading the Ukrainian countryside to disaster can be discerned.<sup>17</sup>

The Ukrainian Soviet regime was able to deliver only 7 million tonnes, and in 1932 the virtually unanimous opposition of the Ukrainian hierarchy forced Stalin to lower the 1932 quota to 6.5 million tonnes.<sup>18</sup> However, the 1932 Ukrainian wheat crop was less than two-thirds of that of 1930. This was still better than the worst year of the NEP when there had been no famine, and there would have been no famine in 1932—3 had it not been for the fact that all the remaining food was taken out of the village. The quotas were not met—only 4.7 million tonnes were obtained at a cost of millions of lives.<sup>19</sup>

Draconian measures were taken. On the Union level, "socialist property" was declared inviolate, and anyone who so much as gleaned an ear of wheat or bit the root off a sugar beet was declared an enemy of the people who could be executed or sentenced to not less than ten years. The same decree also provided for five to ten years for collective farmers who attempted to force others to leave the collective farm. During 1932, fully 20 per cent of all persons convicted in Soviet courts were sentenced under this decree, and Stalin himself called it "the basis of revolutionary legality at the present moment."<sup>20</sup>

In Ukraine, a decree of 6 December 1932 singled out six villages that had allegedly sabotaged the grain procurements campaign. They were placed on a "blacklist," which was soon extended in wholesale fashion. The blacklist meant the complete economic blockade of villages



listed: the immediate closing of stores and the removal of their goods from the village; a complete ban on all trade in the village, including trade in the most essential goods; immediate halting and calling in of all credits and advances; a thorough purge of local co-operative and state institutions; and the purging of "foreign elements" and wreckers of the grain procurements campaign from the collective farm, which was at that time equivalent to a sentence of death by starvation.<sup>21</sup>

Only those who survived the famine can describe adequately what it was like. They tell how the activists were given pointed sticks which they used to probe the ground in search of buried grain, of the entire village population swelling up from starvation, of the numbers of the dead exceeding the capacity to bury them decently so that each day a dead wagon would pick up bodies which would then be dumped in large pits; they tell of whole villages becoming deserted, of literal armies of homeless children, the *bezprizorni*, roaming the country in search of a way to survive and of railroad stations literally flooded with starving peasants who had to beg lying down because they were too weak to stand.<sup>22</sup> Many tried to cross the border into the Russian Republic where bread was available. Ivan Maistrenko, a former Soviet newspaper editor, once wrote of two villages on either side of a stream, one in Ukraine and the other in Russia. At night peasants would swim across to buy bread on the Russian side because only there was bread available.<sup>23</sup> The secret police went so far as to establish border checkpoints along the Russo-Ukrainian border to prevent the starving from going to Russia and prevent anyone from carrying food from Russia into Ukraine.<sup>24</sup> This meant the *de facto* blacklisting of the entire Ukrainian SSR.

Graphic portraits of the horrors of village life emerge from the files of the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, conducted in the early 1950s. It should be stressed that the interviewers were not particularly interested in the famine, and the accounts recorded were obtained without prompting by the interviewer during the course of routine life histories. Indeed, many of the transcripts indicate that the interviewer ceased recording when the respondent came to the famine because there were so many such stories which the interviewer heard time and time again. It is also worth noting that of the numerous books which grew out of the Harvard Project, none touch on the famine. Rather typical of the more general accounts encountered is the following:

... there was the famine in the Ukraine in 1933. We saw people die in the streets; it was terrible to see a dead man, when I close my eyes I can still see him. We had in our village a small church which was closed for services and in which we played. And I remember a man who came in

there; he lay down with his eyes wide open at the ceiling and he died there! He was an innocent victim of the Soviet regime; he was a simple worker and not even a kulak. This hunger was the result of Soviet policy.<sup>25</sup>

Other accounts are more graphic, as that of a Russian woman who was sent out to inspect wells in Ukrainian villages which were completely deserted and who once entered a hut in which an entire family lay dead. The father had evidently gone insane after witnessing the death of his wife and child and died with a piece of his son's body, which he was attempting to eat, in his hand.<sup>26</sup> Nor were such horrors confined to the countryside. At one point there were 150 people imprisoned in Kiev on charges of cannibalism.<sup>27</sup> A worker interviewed by the Harvard Project describes one incident as follows:

I remember a case in 1933. I was in Kiev. I was at that time at a bazaar . . . called the Bessarabian market. I saw a woman with a valise. She opened the valise and put out her goods for sale. Her goods consisted of jellied meat, frozen jellied meat, which she sold at fifty rubles a portion. I saw a man come over to her—a man who bore all the marks of starvation—he bought himself a portion and began eating. As he ate of his portion, he noticed that a human finger was imbedded in the jelly. He began shouting at the woman . . . and yelling at the top of his voice. People came running, gathered around her; and then seeing what her goods consisted of, took her to the militia. At the militia, two members of the NKVD went over to her and, instead of taking action against her, they burst out laughing. "What, you killed a kulak? Good for you!" And then, they let her go.<sup>28</sup>

The common folk were not the only ones to tell what they saw. One account, no less valuable for being second-hand, comes from Khrushchev's unofficial memoirs, which were smuggled out and published in the West:

Mikoyan told me that Comrade Demchenko, who was then First Secretary of the Kiev Regional Committee, once came to see him in Moscow. Here's what Demchenko said: "Anastas Ivanovich, does Comrade Stalin—for that matter, does anyone in the Politburo—know what's happening in the Ukraine? Well, if not, I'll give you some idea. A train recently pulled into Kiev loaded with the corpses of people who had starved to death. It picked up corpses all the way from Poltava to Kiev. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

Of course, Stalin was well aware of what was happening. Officials from Ukraine told him repeatedly. As early as 1932, one of the secretaries of the CP(b)U Central Committee reported the famine to him.<sup>30</sup> Later, both the admiral of the Black Sea Fleet and the commander of the Kiev Military District lodged personal protests to Stalin. All were rebuffed.<sup>31</sup>

According to the 1939 Soviet census, the number of Ukrainians in the USSR had decreased by 3.1 million (9.9 per cent) since the last official census was taken in 1926.<sup>32</sup> Had there been no famine, there would undoubtedly have been a substantial increase in their number. Between 1897 and 1926 the Ukrainian population—despite the demographic catastrophes of the war, revolution, civil war and the 1921 famine—grew an average of 1.3 per cent a year.<sup>33</sup> In 1958–9 the Ukrainian population of the Soviet Union had a natural rate of population growth of 1.39 per cent per year, although by 1969 it slowed to an annual rate of 0.6 per cent.<sup>34</sup> Administrative estimates of the Ukrainian population were published annually up to 1931 and show quite accurately the natural annual rate of population growth declining from 2.45 per cent in 1924 to 2.15 per cent in 1928, but even with the drastic lowering in living standards after the beginning of enforced collectivization, Soviet Ukraine had a natural rate of population growth of 1.45 per cent in 1931.<sup>35</sup> Here the statistics stop.

The magnitude of the demographic catastrophe suffered by the Ukrainians is best, if rather crudely, shown by a comparison of the 1926 and 1939 population figures for the three East Slavic nations:<sup>36</sup>

	1926 population	1939 population	Percent Change
USSR	147,027,900	170,557,100	+ 15.7%
Russians	77,791,100	99,591,500	+ 28.0%
Belorussians	4,738,900	5,275,400	+ 11.3%
Ukrainians	31,195,000	28,111,000	- 9.9% <sup>36</sup>

Let us examine these figures for a moment. The large increase in the number of Russians is obviously a result partly of assimilation. However, this makes comparison with the Belorussians particularly significant. Culturally and linguistically, the Ukrainians have no closer relative than the Belorussians. At the time of the revolution, the Ukrainians exhibited a stronger national movement than did the Belorussians, and they had a higher literacy rate. Thus, one would expect Belorussians to



be more susceptible to assimilation than the Ukrainians. On the other hand, the Ukrainians had a higher birth rate and natural rate of population growth than did the Belorussians in the 1920s. Both nations went through roughly the same sort of purely political repression and the pressures for assimilation were about equal. The major difference between them was that the Ukrainians went through the famine of 1933 and the Belorussians did not. By every major indicator, one would have expected the Ukrainians to grow more rapidly than the Belorussians during the 1930s, yet the number of Belorussians increased by 11.5 per cent and Ukrainians decreased by 9.9 per cent. This would lead us to assume that five to seven million Ukrainians perished in the famine of 1933.

Actually the figure might well be higher. The figure of ten million total victims of the famine seems to have circulated within the Soviet elite.<sup>37</sup> This substantially higher figure might well be closer to the truth. The Soviet census of 1937 was withdrawn before distribution, and those in charge of it were repressed, allegedly for attempting to discredit the idea of building socialism in one country by undercounting the population.<sup>38</sup> Obviously, their findings were damaging.

We will know the number of victims only if the early 1937 Soviet census is released, and that is highly unlikely. Had its findings not been severely damaging, it would not have been suppressed. In any case, whether it was five or ten million who perished is not the point. The point is that the Ukrainian famine was a deliberate act of genocide of roughly the same order of magnitude as the Jewish Holocaust of the Second World War, both in the number of its victims and in the human suffering it produced.

Why did it happen? We can only judge the tree by its fruit, and we must therefore ask what it produced. At the height of the famine Skrypnyk was denounced for allegedly shielding "kulak nationalists" like those "responsible for the sabotage of the grain procurements," demoted, and driven to suicide in July 1933. Ukrainization was abandoned at the end of 1933. In November 1934 a decree on the teaching of history was published. This decree condemned what had hitherto been the official interpretation of Russian history, that tsarist Russia had been an empire which oppressed its colonies, and a new ideology of Soviet patriotism was enunciated, rehabilitating Russian imperial history, tsars and all. The mask had dropped, the empire was revived.

If we ask ourselves who could plausibly be considered the greatest obstacle to the creation of this new type of USSR, administratively centralized, Russocentric, with the ideology of Russian nationalism (albeit called Soviet patriotism) as its driving force, we may plausibly give the following as our answer: the Ukrainians who had fought stubbornly for

their independence and who compelled the creation of a relatively autonomous entity even within the USSR; the cossacks of the North Caucasus, who had first formed a national government and later provided the base of anti-Bolshevik military activities during the civil war; and the Germans, who had in 1918 welcomed the German occupation of Ukraine with open arms. And these are precisely the peoples whose territories fell victim to the man-made famine.

For the Ukrainians, the famine must be understood as the most terrible part of a consistent policy carried out against them: the destruction of their cultural and spiritual elite which began with the trial of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, the destruction of the official Ukrainian wing of the Communist Party, and the destruction of their social basis in the countryside. Against them the famine seems to have been designed as part of a campaign to destroy them as a political factor and as a social organism. By suppressing Ukrainian national expression and clearing the way for the revival of Stalin's new Russian empire, the famine was crucial in the development of the USSR. We live with its legacy to this day.

## NOTES

1. "Protybolshevytski povstannia na Ukraini v 1921. (Na osnovi ofitsiialnykh bolshevytskykh zvidomlen i inshykh neopublikovanykh materiialiv sot. N. P-pa)," *Litopys chervonoï kalyny*, nos. 6 and 9 (1932). See also O. O. Kucher, *Rozhrom zbroinoï vnutrishnoi kontrrevoliutsii na Ukraini u 1921-1923 rr.* (Kharkiv 1971).
2. Most of the political background on Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s is taken from J. E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933*, (Cambridge, Ma. 1983).
3. *Visti* [Visty until 1929] *Vseukrainskoho tsentralnoho vykonavchoho komitetu*, 18 May 1924. Hereafter cited as *Visti*.
4. See A. J. Motyl, *The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919-1929* (New York 1980), 57-60.
5. "Resolution on the National Question in Central Europe and the Balkans," *The Communist International*, no. 7 (December 1924 - January 1925): 93-9.
6. See J. E. Mace, "The Ukrainian *Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian* and the Structure of Soviet Rule in the Ukrainian Countryside, 1920-1933" *Soviet Studies*, no. 4 (1983): 487-503.

7. On the functioning of the *seksot* system, see the Soviet archival documents published by P. S. Lykho, "Soviet Rule at Close Quarters: The Work of The Party in a Typical Raion in The Ukraine, 1921–41," *Ukrainian Review* (Munich), no. 6 (1958): 56–67.
8. See, for example, O. M. Krykunenko, *Borotba Komunistychnoi partii Ukrainy za zdiisnennia leninskoho kooperatyvnoho planu*, (Lviv 1970), 55; F. Pravoberezhnyi [Pigido], *8,000,000: 1933-i rik na Ukraini* (Winnipeg 1951), 42.
9. In Russia, some went so far to suggest that the initials of the All-Union Communist Party (VKP) actually could be taken to mean *vtoroe krepostnoe pravo*, the law of the second serfdom.
10. This was implicitly recognized by the formula of the day that an increase in the marketable surplus constituted the essential feature of the collective farm system.
11. See J. E. Mace, "Politics and History in Soviet Ukraine, 1921–1933," *Nationalities Papers*, no. 2 (1982): 157–80.
12. The indictment was published as "Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukrainy. (Z vynuvalnoho vysnovku v spravi 'SVU')," *Visti*, 26 February–9 March, 1930.
13. Especially in the field of linguistics and orthography. See Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation*, chapters six and eight.
14. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow 1946–1952), 7: 72.
15. V. Holub[nychy], "Prychyny holodu 1932–1933 rr.," *Vpered: Ukrainskyi robitnychyi chasopis*, no. 1 (1938): 5.
16. V. I. Kozlov, *Natsionalnosti SSSR. (Etnodemograficheskii obzor)* (Moscow 1975), 249.
17. Holub[nychy], "Prychyny holody," 5–6.
18. I. I. Slynko, *Sotsiialistychna perebudova i tekhnichna rekonstruktsiia silskoho hospodarstva Ukrainy (1927–1932 rr.)* (Kiev 1961), 300.
19. V. Hryshko, *Moskva slozam ne viryt. Tragediia Ukrainy 1933 roku z perspektyvy 30 richchia (1933–1963)* (New York 1963), 34.
20. R. Conquest, ed., *Agricultural Workers in the USSR* (London 1968), 24–5.
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22. In addition to the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project files, see the following collections of eyewitness testimony published by Ukrainian organizations: *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Detroit and Toronto 1953–5); M. Verbytsky, ed., *Naibilshy zlochyn Kremliia. Stvorenni sovetskoiu Moskvoiu holod v Ukraini 1932–33 r.* (London 1952); Iu. Semenko, ed., *Holod 1933 roku v Ukraini. Svidchennia pro vynyshchuvannia Moskvoiu ukrainskoho selianstva* (New York 1963).

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25. Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, A Schedule, Case 128. These files are in the possession of the Russian Research Center at Harvard University.
26. *Ibid.*, Case 373.
27. E. Ammende, *Human Life in Russia* (London 1936), 101.
28. Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, Case 513.
29. N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston and Toronto 1970), 73–4.
30. R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York 1972), 94.
31. L. Plyushch, *History's Carnival: A Dissident's Autobiography* (New York and London 1977), 40–1.
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34. V. I. Naulko, *Etnichnyi skliad naseleennia Ukrainskoi RSR. Statystyko-kartohrafichne doslidzhennia* (Kiev 1965), 85; V. I. Naulko, *Razvitie mezhetnicheskikh svyazei na Ukraine* (Kiev 1975), 67.
35. Naulko, *Etnichnyi sklad*, 84.
36. Kozlov, *Natsionalnosti SSSR*, 249.
37. See, for example, *New York American*, 18 August 1935 and 19 August 1935.
38. B. Souvarine, *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism* (New York 1939), 669.

# THE MAN-MADE FAMINE OF 1932–1933 AND COLLECTIVIZATION IN SOVIET UKRAINE

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The immediate background to the famine was the problem of meeting highly unrealistic goals set by the Stalinist leadership in the First Five-Year Plan. It must be remembered that throughout most of the 1920s Stalin opposed planning and industrialization. Had preparations for industrialization been made early in the 1920s, this would have allowed time to rationalize economic strategies and permit their more gradual implementation. Instead, it was only in 1928–9 that Stalin, very abruptly, changed direction. The result was a highly improvised and dilettantish First Five-Year Plan. Rudzutak, a leading Soviet economic official, was later to report (1934) many instances of the chaos which existed in industry at that time. For example, plans for the Tagil engineering works had to be altered nine times in twenty-six months, involving a loss of several hundred million rubles. As a result of poor and hasty planning, 50 per cent of the goods produced by the Stankolit works in Moscow were entirely useless.<sup>1</sup> Because too many projects had been started simultaneously, and too many resources had been wasted through bureaucratic incompetence, by 1930 an acute shortage of capital was making itself felt.

At this time, the Depression in the West caused world grain prices to drop sharply in relation to those of manufactured goods, compounding the effects of Soviet economic mismanagement. In order to industrialize, equipment from the West had to be imported. To pay for it, the

USSR exported grain. Now, more grain would have to be exported for the same quantity of equipment. More grain had to be squeezed out of the peasantry and the quickest method of doing this was, in the words of Stalin, "to establish a system whereby the collective farmers will deliver to the state and the co-operative organizations the whole of their marketable grain under penalty. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Ukraine, as the Soviet Union's major grain producing area, was singled out for accelerated collectivization. <sup>3</sup>

The scope of collectivization that was proclaimed caught everyone, including the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) and state officials, by surprise. In the autumn of 1929, several months before "total collectivization" was ordered, collective farms (of all kinds) represented a mere 3.7 per cent of Ukraine's arable land and 5.6 per cent of the total number of rural households. This was the meagre result of almost two years of intensive campaigning for the voluntary formation of collective farms. The original version of the First Five-Year Plan called for collectivization of approximately 10 per cent of Ukraine's arable land by the end of 1932 with rudimentary forms of collective labour, not collective farms, as the dominant organizational form. <sup>4</sup> In November 1929, however, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Politburo ordered collectivization in Ukraine to be speeded up in order to "intensify export and the production of raw materials for industry." <sup>5</sup> Initially, peasants were to have been allowed to keep livestock for their personal consumption. The revised plan called for the establishment of collective farms on 20 per cent of the republic's arable land involving 30 per cent of peasant households by the end of 1932. <sup>6</sup> In February 1930 the policy was again changed. All peasant households were ordered to be collectivized by the autumn of 1930 and the "complete socialization" of all peasant livestock was decreed. <sup>7</sup> War was declared on the Ukrainian peasant.

An essential component of forced collectivization, according to Stalin, was the "elimination of kulaks as a class" in order to "replace their output by the output of the collective farms and state farms." <sup>8</sup> In reality, the destruction of kulaks had little to do with economic considerations. By Stalin's own admission, kulaks supplied only a fifth of the Soviet Union's marketable grain surplus (that is, grain not consumed in the countryside). The middle level and poor peasants furnished three-quarters of the total. <sup>9</sup> The procurement campaigns of 1928 and 1929 had already crippled the richer peasants as producers. In 1929, in particular, the heavy fines imposed on the richer peasants, including the confiscation of the property of 33,000 households for the non-delivery of grain quotas, undermined the economic power of this sector of the peasantry. <sup>10</sup>



The word “kulak” conjures up an image of a wealthy, grasping peasant. The reality had little in common with the myth. The average annual income per working peasant in the richest “kulak” household in Ukraine, that is, one with over 16.5 hectares of land, was 200 rubles in 1924. The average annual income of a worker, on the other hand, was 521 rubles, not including the many social security benefits which workers enjoyed and which were not available to the peasantry.<sup>11</sup> When the “dekulakization” campaign was started, the Soviet regime was at a loss for a definition of what constituted a “kulak.” A haphazard set of criteria were produced. For example, a household owning a motor of any kind was classified as belonging to the “kulak” category.<sup>12</sup> Even the seemingly more solid definition of a kulak household as one hiring labour was off the mark. As M. Maksudov has shown, the majority of those employing labour in the countryside were invalids of the First World War and the revolution, widows and families with few children. Some peasant households did, of course, own more land than others. But these households, as a general rule, also had larger families to support. According to agricultural surveys carried out in Ukraine in 1929, 71,500 households were classified as “kulak.”<sup>13</sup> In the course of the dekulakization campaign, which began in January 1930 and continued until 1932, 200,000 kulak households (or approximately one million people) were, according to official sources, “liquidated.”<sup>14</sup> Dekulakization was intended primarily to rid the countryside of the natural leadership of the peasantry. As V. Gsovski noted, “it was not so much the prosperity of a peasant as his attitude toward collectivization which determined his class character.”<sup>15</sup>

During dekulakization, kulaks had their property confiscated and were forbidden to join collective farms. The kulaks were divided into three groups. The first group, called “counter-revolutionary kulak activists,” was composed of peasants who actively resisted collectivization; they were either executed or sent to prison camps and their families were deported. The “wealthiest kulaks,” who made up the second group, were deported with their families to remote regions of the Soviet Union. The rest were ordered to leave their districts. These were the general rules established by the CPSU in January 1930. Their implementation varied greatly from region to region.<sup>16</sup> In Ukraine, the dekulakization campaign took on especially brutal forms:

Barefooted and underclothed peasants were jammed into railroad cars and transported to the regions of Murmansk, Vologda, Kotlas and the like. This kurkulization [‘kurkul’ is the Ukrainian for kulak] was carried on in the Russian districts, but here it took on a more human form, if one may apply that term here. Those Russian kurkuls whose property was taken

away were often allowed to remain in their villages and if they were deported they were generally deported to the western districts of Siberia or the region of Sadensk. The death rate among the expropriated Russian peasants was disproportionately lower . . . <sup>17</sup>

According to one eyewitness account, peasants were "unloaded into the snow about six feet deep. The frost registered at 75 degrees below zero. . . . Without even an axe or a saw we began building huts from tree branches. In two weeks all the children, the sick and the aged had frozen to death." The death rate among Ukrainian peasants deported to Nadezhdinsk in the Sverdlovsk region in Russia was typical: only 2,300 out of the original group of 4,800 survived the winter.<sup>18</sup>

Forced collectivization unleashed wide and spontaneous resistance among all strata of village society. Peasant revolts broke out in most regions of Ukraine. In Chernihiv, the 21st Red Army regiment joined the peasant rebellion.<sup>19</sup> Everywhere peasants slaughtered their livestock, burnt their crops, and as many as were able fled to the cities. Rural state and party officials opposed collectivization. In 1930 a fifth of all rural state and party functionaries were dismissed on charges of "right opportunism."<sup>20</sup> The army, the secret police, then called the GPU, the militia and armed brigades of reliable urban party members were sent into the villages to implement collectivization. Just as in earlier revolts against the Soviet regime, during forced collectivization the village poor were at the forefront of unrest. According to a newspaper report, the slaughter of animals was carried out mostly by poor and middle peasants.<sup>21</sup> V.A. Iakovtsevskii, a Soviet historian, pointed out that resistance to collectivization was greatest among the poor peasants who had recently obtained land and among the middle peasantry who had recently risen from the ranks of the poor.<sup>22</sup>

The publication of Stalin's article "Dizzy with Success" was evidence that the Soviet leadership had become nervous about rural unrest. Stalin admitted that "excesses" had occurred during collectivization and pinned the entire blame on local officials.<sup>23</sup> The Ukrainian press, during the momentary thaw which followed the publication of Stalin's article, published several accounts which gave some indication of how collectivization had been carried out. The homes of poor and middle peasants, according to one report, were razed in the middle of the night and the peasants forced at gunpoint to enter collective farms. Confiscated property was often stolen by urban brigades. The militia roamed village streets arresting anyone in sight. Communalization of property in many villages extended even to clothes and footwear.<sup>24</sup>

The emphasis on the "voluntary" nature of collective farms following Stalin's article was prompted by the fear that growing peasant resis-



tance would severely damage spring sowing. Peasants were allowed to leave collective farms and in Ukraine a mass exodus occurred. Whereas on 1 March 1930, 69 per cent of the arable land and 63 per cent of peasant households had been collectivized, by May 1930, the corresponding figures were 50 and 41 per cent.<sup>25</sup> This permitted the regime to get the situation in the countryside under control and it also facilitated work in the fields which resulted in a good harvest in 1930—23.1 million tonnes. That year, 7.7 million tonnes of grain were taken from Ukraine, or a third of the harvest. “That Ukraine was being exploited,” wrote V. Holubnychy, “can be seen from the fact that while the total grain harvest in Ukraine amounted to 27 per cent of the all-Union harvest in 1930, the consignment of grain in Ukraine accounted for 38 per cent of the grain consigned in the entire Soviet Union in 1930.”<sup>26</sup> The amount of grain taken out of Ukraine in 1930 was 2.3 times what it had been in 1926. Three factors made this possible. Climatic conditions were optimal that year, the private sector boosted production and, finally, the requisition campaign was so intense that seed grain needed for the following year was confiscated. Reassured by this success, forced collectivization was renewed and, by 1931, 65 per cent of rural households and 67 per cent of arable land had been collectivized. By 1933, the figures were 73 and 86 per cent respectively.<sup>27</sup> The 1931 quota for grain delivery to the state was set at the level achieved in 1930—7.7 million tonnes. Very early in 1932 famine appeared in Ukraine and it ravaged the countryside until the end of 1933.

In explaining why the famine occurred, two factors are most important as background information. The first was the collapse of agricultural production brought about by collectivization. Rather than surrender their animals to the collectives, many peasants slaughtered them. In 1928 there were 7.0 million hogs in Ukraine, in 1933, 2.1 million; cattle declined in the same period from 8.6 to 4.4 million and the number of horses from 5.4 to 2.6 million.<sup>28</sup> This not only meant that meat delivery quotas could not be fulfilled, but it also accentuated what was always a major problem in Ukrainian agriculture—the shortage of draught animals. The production of tractors was in its infancy and could not replace animal power. In 1932, for example, Ukraine had on the average one tractor per collective farm.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, tractors were under a separate jurisdiction from the collective farms; they belonged to the Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS), an arrangement which was opposed by the Ukrainian leadership on the grounds that it made an effective integration of agricultural production impossible.<sup>30</sup> The tractors themselves were of extremely low quality and were constantly breaking down. During the fateful harvest of 1932, to give an example, 70 per cent of the tractors in Dnipropetrovsk oblast were inoperative in Au-

gust, and by September this had increased to 90 per cent.<sup>31</sup> The peasantry was given no incentive to produce. By the end of 1930, 78 per cent of collective farms had failed to pay peasants the "labour days" worked.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the "labour day" payment in Ukraine (in kilogrammes of food produce) was half what it was in Russia.<sup>33</sup> Collective farms were excessively large, reflecting the mania for gargantuan projects that dominated Stalinist economic thinking; the Ukrainian leadership had called for small "co-operative collectives."<sup>34</sup> Highly bureaucratized in their decision-making structure, collective farms left no room for individual or group initiatives. In 1932 some collective-farm chairmen wished to sow rye instead of wheat, arguing that rye was a more suitable crop for their region. "These bearers of anti-wheat sentiments must be severely punished," was the reply that came from Moscow.<sup>35</sup> The combination of all these factors resulted in unbelievable chaos in production. Between 1931 and 1932 the total sowing area in Ukraine contracted by one-fifth; in 1931, almost 30 per cent of the grain yield was lost during the harvest.<sup>36</sup>

To add to the difficulties a drought affected Ukraine. It began in 1931 and was limited largely to the steppe region.<sup>37</sup> In 1934 another far more serious drought developed. The disruption in agricultural production together with climatic conditions caused relatively poor yields in 1931, 1932 and especially in 1934. The 1931 harvest, according to official sources, gave 18.3 million tonnes of grain, considerably less than the 23.1 million tonne figure of 1930. In 1932, 14.6 million tonnes were harvested, in 1933, 22.3 and in 1934, 12.3.<sup>38</sup>

The above two factors, chaos in agricultural production and the drought, contributed to the famine, but they were not its main cause. In 1934, the year of the poorest harvest, there was no famine in Ukraine. Responsibility for the famine rested with the Stalinist leadership and the draconian grain requisition quotas that were imposed on Ukraine in order to maintain the heady industrialization pace. In 1931, 7.7 million tonnes were ordered to be requisitioned from Ukraine, the same as in 1930, even though the harvest was 20 per cent less than in 1930. Moscow ordered that the grain be obtained at any cost and applied enormous pressure to that end. Troops and police were used to take all peasant stocks. Seven million tonnes were obtained, leaving the average peasant household in Ukraine with only 112 kilogrammes of grain. "For the peasants, whose main staple had for centuries been bread, this was a catastrophe."<sup>39</sup> The amount of grain requisitioned was so great that the republic was short of seed grain by 45 per cent.<sup>40</sup>

Anxious about the impending catastrophe, the Ukrainian leadership argued with Moscow for a major downward revision of its agricultural obligation for the year 1932. The amount was lowered to 6.2 million

tonnes, but this was still far above the capacities of the republic in view of the poor harvest—14.6 million tonnes of grain, of which 40 per cent was lost during the harvest because of the breakdown of machinery and the muddled transportation system.<sup>37</sup> To ensure that the Ukrainian party obeyed orders, a special mission headed by Molotov and Kaganovich arrived in Kharkiv (then the capital of Ukraine). Every conceivable method was used to extract 6.2 million tonnes of grain. The state and party apparatus was purged in those regions that lagged behind in grain requisition; newspapers that failed to campaign aggressively for the collection of grain had their staffs dismissed; every third person holding a responsible position in the collective farms was purged; troops and armed brigades were sent into the villages to carry out mass repression of peasants who did not surrender their last morsel of bread.<sup>38</sup>

It was during the August 1932 harvest that the infamous law was passed stipulating the death penalty and, under exceptional circumstances, a ten-year sentence in a labour camp, for “theft of socialist property.”<sup>39</sup> Visiting assizes of the regional court of Dnipropetrovsk oblast, for example, sentenced peasants to the firing squad for the theft of a sack of wheat.<sup>40</sup> Ukrainian farmers became “the most numerous” among “political offenders” in the Soviet Gulag.<sup>41</sup> According to the most recently available information, in early January 1933, 75 per cent of the grain quotas was fulfilled, that is 4.7 million tonnes.<sup>42</sup> This left the average peasant family with 80 kilogrammes of grain with which to feed itself for a year.<sup>43</sup>

The famine, which began in January 1932, finally subsided in 1934, when the 1933 harvest was in. This was because Ukraine, lacking 55 per cent of its seed grain, was “lent” seed grain by Moscow and, more significantly, Moscow reduced the quantity of grain to be delivered to the state to 5.0 million tonnes even though the 1933 harvest was 22.3 million tonnes of grain.<sup>44</sup> Nineteen-thirty-four could have been a famine year as well since the grain harvest was a mere 12.3 million tonnes. It was not, however, because the amount of grain requisitioned was reduced further and Stalin even released grain from existing stocks to feed the population.<sup>45</sup> He could have done something similar in 1932–3, but he did not and one of the worst famines in human history raged in Ukraine.

What is important to stress about the 1932–3 famine is that it was artificially created and that no effort was made to relieve the plight of its victims. When Ukraine was famine-stricken, the Soviet regime exported 1.7 million tonnes of grain to the West.<sup>46</sup> The offers of international relief organizations to assist the starving were rejected on the grounds that there was no famine in Ukraine and hence no need to aid its victims.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the borders of Ukraine were closely patrolled,

and starving Ukrainian peasants were not allowed to cross into Russia in search of bread.<sup>48</sup>

Because many eyewitness accounts of the famine have been published it is unnecessary to describe in detail the ghastly scenes which were to be observed in Ukraine throughout 1932 and 1933. However, something has to be said about the famine as a human experience, for the event cannot be understood merely through the presentation of the economic factors which brought it about. Victor Kravchenko, a former Soviet official, wrote that "on the battlefield men die quickly, they fight back, they are sustained by fellowship and a sense of duty." But in Ukrainian villages throughout 1932-3, he observed, "I saw people dying in solitude by slow degrees, dying hideously. . . . They had been trapped and left to starve, each in his home, by a political decision made in a far-off capital around conference and banquet tables."<sup>49</sup>

The main victims of the famine were not even the imagined enemies of the Soviet regime, the kulaks, since they had been eliminated by 1932 when the famine began. It was the poor and middle peasantry who died agonizing deaths in the millions. The deaths of hundreds of thousands of children was perhaps the most horrible scene to be observed in Ukraine. They would lie on the streets and in the ditches, trying to gather their remaining energy to look for something to eat. Often they were so weak that they would remain lying there, until death released them from their agony. "The poor children," wrote a German agricultural expert who travelled throughout Ukraine in 1933, "perished like wild beasts."<sup>50</sup> Hundreds of thousands of children were orphaned and many of these foraged the countryside in search of food and were ultimately eliminated by troops and the police by means of mass executions.<sup>51</sup>

What happened in the village of Pleshkan in the Poltava district was typical. Prior to the famine the village had 2,000 inhabitants. Only 982 people survived by eating everything, all the dogs and cats, the bark of trees, all sorts of roots. There was a school in the village before 1932-3, with all four rooms filled with children. After the famine the school was closed—there were no children left to attend it.<sup>52</sup>

The effects of the experience of collectivization and the famine on the attitudes of the peasantry may have been reflected in the findings of the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System which interviewed Soviet refugees after the Second World War. When asked "whether or not it would be a good idea to drop an atom bomb on Moscow," half the Ukrainian collective farmers answered yes, twice the proportion of the Russian collective farmers.<sup>53</sup> The Ukrainian peasantry seethed with hatred for Moscow, yet Moscow's agrarian policies had destroyed them as a social force. The Ukrainian village was silenced and never



again rose in opposition to the Soviet regime.

The tragedy of the Ukrainian peasantry was a national tragedy. It was, after all, Stalin who wrote, “the peasantry represents the main army of a national movement. . . . Without the peasantry there cannot be a strong national movement.”<sup>54</sup> While this is obviously not a trans-historical truth, it applied in that period. If, in the 1920s, the Soviet regime adopted Ukrainization policies, it was because it feared peasant unrest. When the Ukrainian peasantry was under attack in 1932–3, the Ukrainian elite, whose existence was nurtured by Ukrainization sprang to the peasants’ defence. Ewald Ammende, who analyzed this question wrote:

[T]he widest circle of the Ukrainian intelligentsia had entered the struggle; teachers, students, Soviet officials, all thought it was their duty to protest against a further sucking dry of the country. Future historians will have to admit that in the campaign against the Ukrainians, during the spring and summer of 1933, the Soviet regime was faced by a united people, a solid front, including everyone, from the highest Soviet officials down to the poorest peasants.<sup>55</sup>

National solidarity, which threatened Stalin’s plans for Ukraine’s exploitation, was fostered by Ukrainization policies. In 1933 Stalin ordered that these policies be abandoned. Ukrainization, born with the peasantry, died with it too. The Ukrainian intelligentsia, which had refused to become a willing agent in the extermination of its people, was itself decimated. According to I. Lawrynenko, 80 per cent of Ukraine’s creative intelligentsia was liquidated.<sup>56</sup>

When the casualties of the civil war, collectivization, the famine, the purges of the 1930s and the 6.8 million who died during the Second World War are combined, it is estimated that *more than half the male and one-quarter of the female population of Ukraine perished*.<sup>57</sup> Such a mountain of skulls is unprecedented in human history. Along with these people, the achievements, lessons and hopes that one generation communicates to another were destroyed. Under the circumstances, it was all the more remarkable that Ukrainian society had any strength left for self-assertion in the postwar period. In summing up the 1930s it is no exaggeration to say that the Ukrainians’ greatest achievement during that decade was that they outlasted it.

## NOTES

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# UKRAINE'S DEMOGRAPHIC LOSSES 1927–1938

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This study assesses the minimum number of losses suffered by the Ukrainian population between 1927 and 1938 in Soviet Ukraine. The minimum figure is not only the most important and reliable estimate, but is, moreover, one that can be obtained from official Soviet data. Losses refer to demographic losses, i.e., those people who disappeared prematurely, before their natural death. It is assumed that for any given society there exists a certain normal mortality rate which corresponds to that society's level of development, age structure, medical services, and so on. A loss is that which exceeds this norm, regardless of the immediate cause of death (malnutrition, deterioration of health care, or firing squads). The mortality tables compiled by Iu. Korchak-Cherpurkivsky for 1925–6 can serve as a definition of the normal mortality level for Ukraine in the 1930s. The fact that by 1938–9, as a result of greater urbanization and other similar social changes, the mortality rate for all sex and age groups was lower than in 1925–6 is important to note in this context. It can be assumed that between 1925–6 and 1938–9 the normal or hypothetical mortality rate was gradually decreasing. Thus glaring increases in the mortality rate during this period, sharp deviations from the norm, may be viewed as excess mortality or population loss.

The period under study can be divided, according to the nature of the losses, into two somewhat overlapping phases: collectivization (1928–

36) and the Great Terror (1936–8). On the basis of available sources it is impossible to establish, with any degree of certainty, the demographic losses for each of the two phases, but some thoughts on this question will be offered below.

Turning to collectivization, it should be noted that the living standards of the rural population and the degree of administrative repression it endured varied throughout this period. In the early stage of collectivization, a relatively small group, the better-off strata of the rural population representing some 3 or 4 per cent of peasant households, was subjected to intense economic and police pressures. Extra grain procurement quotas were imposed on this group and they were paid particularly low prices for the additional grain requisitioned. Failure to meet these quotas resulted in criminal charges (under Articles 127 and 135 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR). Offenders were sentenced to a fine which represented five times the value of the original quota, confiscation of all property or a prison term of one to three years. In 1929, 155,000 Ukrainian households or 3 per cent of the total number of rural households in Ukraine were subjected to this extraordinary tax, i.e., a tax imposed in addition to the normal grain quotas.<sup>1</sup> This was twice the estimated number of kulak families as revealed in the 1929 agricultural census, according to which there were 71,500 kulaks in the Ukrainian countryside, or 1.4 per cent of the total number of rural households.<sup>2</sup> It is not known how many people were punished by the courts for failing to meet the additional grain delivery quotas. However, even the partial data that are available are quite revealing. At the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine it was stated that in 1929 in 22 (out of 41) districts in Ukraine the property of 33,000 households was auctioned off and that this figure represented 14.6 per cent of the total number of kulak households in these 22 districts.<sup>3</sup> Thus in 22 districts alone party officials in 1929 claimed there were 224,000 kulak households. There are major discrepancies in official estimates of the number of kulak households—155,000; 72,000; 224,000 (in 22 districts). Various Soviet agencies used different economic and political criteria to define kulaks. Let us examine briefly some of these diverse criteria.

The 1929 agricultural census used a combination of indicators to establish who was a kulak: the value of the means of production (cattle, seed, machinery, farm buildings, etc.) and the extent of employment of hired labour. The census defined a kulak farm as one with means of production worth more than 800 rubles on the condition that these means were also rented out to others; or a farm using hired help for a minimum of 50–75 days a year; or a farm that owned means of production worth 401–800 rubles and employed labour for 151 days a year or more.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that at that time 800 rubles was not a signifi-

cant sum. A farm whose means of production equalled that sum would have had a horse and foal, one or two cows, a plough, mowing-machine and a shed or small barn. A work horse cost more than 100 rubles in that period, a threshing machine several thousand and a tractor tens of thousands of rubles. Thus households defined as kulak by the census did not have even the full complement of agricultural machinery: plough, mowing-machine, winnowing-machine and thresher. Compared to the prosperous prerevolutionary farms or Western farmers, Soviet kulaks were poor. Moreover, the census authorities' emphasis on hired labour was equally misplaced since calculations show that using the census' own definitions, hired labour contributed a negligible 4 to 6 per cent of the surplus product of the so-called kulak household.

Tax collectors used a somewhat different set of criteria in defining kulaks. For them a kulak household was one that made regular use of hired labour or one that owned mechanical, water or wind-powered machinery. Some official documents also stipulated that, in addition, the farm's annual income should be over 300 rubles per person and over 1,500 rubles per family—the latter was slightly below the average urban worker's family income. Finally, authorities also focused on political criteria and simply defined all recalcitrant and undesirable elements as kulaks.

Reprisals against the kulaks during the first phase of collectivization was not the sole determinant in accounting for population loss in this period. The erosion of the living standards of the urban population was an equally important factor. The introduction of food rationing and selective distribution of food through factories dealt a severe blow to numerous groups of the urban population who were neither factory workers nor office staff and thus had no access to food commissaries. The market price of bread more than tripled in two years, seriously affecting the average family.<sup>5</sup>

The second phase of collectivization, 1930–1, is referred to officially as the period of the "destruction of the kulaks as a class." In planning this genocidal action, a commission of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union prepared lists of 52,000 individuals to be executed or imprisoned (their families were to be deported), 150,000 families to be sent into exile to the northern regions of Russia; and 3 to 4 per cent of households (between 750,000 and 1,250,000 peasant households) to be expropriated and resettled in another location in the region where they currently lived.<sup>6</sup> Ukraine's quota in this campaign called for about 40,000 families to be annihilated or deported and 150,000 to 200,000 to be "dekulakized," i.e., all their property was to be expropriated and they were to be resettled in another district of the republic. Soviet historians admit that quotas were exceeded almost

everywhere. Specifically, in Ukraine, in 1930 alone, some 3 per cent of peasant households (160,000) were "dekulakized" and "less than one-half were deported outside the republic."<sup>7</sup> This means that some 400,000 Ukrainians were forced to struggle for survival in the extremely harsh conditions of Russia's northern regions (Komi, Karelia, northern Urals). According to other Soviet authors, dekulakized families numbered 200,000.<sup>8</sup> This figure apparently refers to 1930 alone, because it is followed by a figure giving the total value of confiscated properties in 1930. That figure, 90–95 million rubles, is indicative of the large number of families affected since, according to the People's Commissariat of Finance, the average worth of an expropriated family was 500 to 600 rubles.<sup>9</sup> I. Trifonov's estimate of the total number of families exiled from Ukraine as "less than one-half" of 160,000 would appear to signify a total of 60,000 to 70,000 families, but probably not less (55,000 would have been described as "one-third"). Ukraine, therefore, more than other republics, was the target of excessive zeal. N.A. Ivnikskii cited the total number of those deported as 78,000; other Soviet sources give the figure of 115,000: in other words, Ukraine accounted for about one-half the total number of deportees in the USSR.<sup>10</sup> The following year, 1931, the total number of dekulakized families in the USSR declined by 50 per cent (to about 200,000) while the number of those deported doubled (160,000 families); however, data for Ukraine are unavailable.<sup>11</sup>

Based on data supplied by Ivnikskii, it is possible to estimate population losses which occurred as a result of deportation. Of the 300,000–400,000 families deported (some 1.5 million people) by 1940,<sup>12</sup> only 220,000 families (930,000 individuals) still lived in the locality to which they had been sent. One must include, in any calculation of population loss, natural population increase during this eight-year period (some 10 per cent), those who left because they were rehabilitated (roughly 6 per cent) and those who escaped.<sup>13</sup> Taking this into consideration, approximately 400,000 to 500,000 people remain unaccounted for and they undoubtedly perished in the course of being transported to these remote regions or because of the extremely harsh living conditions during exile. The Ukrainians' share of the total number of deportees was between 20 to 25 per cent and it is likely that this was also their share of the total number who perished. Therefore approximately 100,000 Ukrainians died as a result of deportation.

The population losses of 1930–1 include not only those resulting from dekulakization, but also those caused by deteriorating living standards. It suffices to point out that market prices for food in the USSR increased from 1928 to the end of the First Five-Year Plan by over 3,000 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

The third period of collectivization, starting in 1932, was the most devastating. At this time the state began to restructure collective farms in order to procure for itself a definite quantity of farm produce regardless of conditions in the countryside. Villages no longer received their allotted share of industrial and consumer goods; the procurement price for agricultural commodities was fixed at a level ten times less than their market value and these prices were never adjusted. More important, in case of crop failure, the peasantry was forced to turn over to the state almost its entire production and could not withhold for itself even the minimum required for survival. This devastating arrangement resulted in famine on a mass scale. In 1932 came yet another crushing blow; grain sales were forbidden in regions that had failed to meet their procurement quotas. This measure hit hard a broad strata of the rural population which had traditionally purchased a portion of their grain supplies on the market. The famine of 1933 inflicted terrible population losses on Ukraine and the whole Soviet Union. But even in succeeding years, in 1934–6, the situation did not improve much. According to the estimates produced in the 1930s by the Central Statistical Administration, the average annual grain harvest in the USSR between 1933 and 1936 was 66.8 million tonnes. Of this amount 26.4 million tonnes were requisitioned by the state and 13.3 million were set aside for seed. The demand for feed grain could not have been under 9 million tonnes, and the minimal losses of grain during harvesting would have been around 2 million. Thus, each of the USSR's 120 million rural inhabitants was left with a mere 440 grammes of grain (under a pound) as the daily average over a four-year period.<sup>15</sup>

One must realize also that 440 grammes was hardly the consumption norm. Immense variations in distribution according to territory, social stratum, and finally year (1933 and 1936 were very difficult, 1934 and 1935 were more benign), meant that large groups of the rural population received, practically speaking, no bread at all. In Ukraine during this period the situation was far worse than the average for the USSR because of the disproportionately large procurement quotas imposed on that republic.

The indirect effects of the famine also contributed to the population losses of those years since as a result of widespread malnutrition there was a rise in mortality from a wide range of diseases. A graphic illustration of the scale and causes of demographic loss is the Book of Civil Records of Deaths of the Village of Romankove in Dnipropetrovsk province, covering the second half of 1933. A microfilm copy of this document is on file at Columbia University library.<sup>16</sup> Romankove was a large village with slightly under 5,000 residents, located near the industrial centre of Maïanske (renamed Dniprodzerzhinsk in 1935). The



record shows, that 595 people died in that year, or 12 per cent of the village residents. This was nearly ten times the normal death rate of Ukraine's urban population. For instance, in the city of Kryvyi Rih, in 1929, 550 people died out of a total population of 43,000; in Zaporizhzhia, with a population of 72,000, there were 852 deaths; in Maïanske itself, which had a population of 50,000, 796 residents died.<sup>17</sup>

The majority of people in Romankove died at home, with apparently no recourse to medical assistance. Only 7 per cent of the deaths took place in the hospital. The diagnoses cited as the cause of death were determined posthumously by village clerks based on relatives' testimony. In one out of ten cases, the diagnosis reads: "bodily emaciation," the euphemism for starvation. Significantly, the records refer to August-December 1933, when the new crops had already ripened, so some food was available. Hunger was also behind most of the gastrointestinal diseases that were responsible for 27 per cent of deaths (as compared with the 7 per cent share of gastrointestinal mortality that was the norm in Ukraine). Other diseases, such as pneumonia, typhus and tuberculosis, also took an unusually heavy toll of the population debilitated by hunger. These diseases accounted for more than half of all deaths in the village.

The intensity of human losses caused by hunger in Ukraine and other republics of the Soviet Union can be gauged by comparing 1959 census returns for the generation born between 1929 and 1933 with the one born between 1934 and 1938.<sup>18</sup> The generation born in 1929-33 should be slightly larger than the one born in 1924-8 since birth rates experienced a significant decline throughout the USSR between the two periods. The census data shows that this was indeed the case in most areas of the USSR. Yet in Ukraine and other territories that were struck by famine, the group born before 1933 is significantly smaller than the next generation. The ratio of these generations is thus an indicator of population loss due to famine. Plotting this indicator on a map, we see that, as one moves across the territory of Ukraine from northwest to southeast, the generational shortfall—and the demographic loss—becomes greater in the central regions following a line drawn through Kiev, Cherkassy, Kirovohrad, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Voroshilovhrad.

The adjacent Russian oblasts bordering Ukraine on the north—Kursk, Belgorod, and Voronezh—and Western Belorussia and Western Ukraine annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939—all have normal age-group ratios. Beyond Ukraine, the demographic loss zone extends, with a marked deterioration, through the Kuban, passes through Volgograd and Saratov oblasts, covers a portion of the South Urals (Penza, Cheliabinsk and Orenburg oblasts) and spreads, decreasing along the



way, over the territory of Kazakhstan. Changes in this indicator correspond closely with other available data on the geography of the famine in 1933.<sup>19</sup> This is not surprising, since one could hardly come up with any other explanation for the drastic differences in the demographic patterns among populations of neighbouring territories with similar cultures and life-styles—such as Belgorod oblast in Russia, with its normal age-group rations and Kharkiv oblast in Ukraine, whose rations show evidence of famine.

In addition to population loss caused by hunger and poor living conditions, the third period of collectivization was also characterized by an increasing number of police reprisals. The 7 August 1932 law on the protection of socialist property sanctioned severe punishment, including execution by firing squad, for minor transgressions, negligence on the job or petty larceny on a collective-farm field. A breakdown of the tractor engine, a dead horse, a carrot picked from the ground of a collective-farm field were sufficient reasons for draconian retribution. Court statistics of that period are unavailable, but partial indirect evidence supplied by Soviet authors is quite revealing. For example, glorifying the effective work of the police in protecting the sacrosanct property of the Soviet state, Trifonov reports that the number of convictions under the 7 August law in Ukraine and the Russian republic dropped fivefold in the latter half of 1934 compared with the first half of 1933, and in the last six months of 1935 by nearly twenty times.<sup>20</sup> Apart from a slackening of enforcement by Soviet judicial agencies, with their typical style of periodic reprisal campaigns aimed at terrorizing the population, the drop in convictions for petty larceny is indicative of some improvement of living conditions.

The bumper harvest of 1937 marked the end of the period of massive population loss due to collectivization. By that time, however, a new genocidal campaign was under way throughout the USSR: the Great Terror of 1936–8. The number of victims claimed by the Great Terror in Ukraine has been estimated at between 200,000 and 300,000.<sup>21</sup> This rough estimate enables us to draw an approximate line between the losses arising from collectivization and those inflicted by the purges of 1936–8.

In evaluating the total demographic losses for the 1927–38 period one must invariably rely on official Soviet materials. There are, however, two pitfalls: the data may be incomplete, or they may have been falsified. Information about the 1932–5 period is kept under the strictest secrecy in Soviet demographic history. In late 1932, i.e., precisely when the famine struck, the Central Statistical Bureau ceased to publish demographic data. No figures are available on population size, birth rates or mortality either for the USSR as a whole or for the individual

Union republics. Limited published data began to appear only seven years later, in 1939. Recent handbooks issued by the Central Statistical Bureau give partial data for 1937–8, but not for the 1933–6 period.

Furthermore, one gets the impression that in the mid-1930s neither the Soviet leaders nor its scholars knew the true demographic picture. Statements by political figures, drafts of the Second Five-Year Plan, and articles by eminent demographers reiterated figures that clashed flagrantly with reality. The fate of the 1937 general population census also reveals a lack of appreciation for the extent of the population losses. The 1937 census was given great prominence and involved more than one million enumerators. Upon its completion in the summer of 1937, the census director, I. Krael, was awarded the Order of Lenin. Then, suddenly, after its results were submitted to the government, the census was declared to be the work of subversives, and its materials destroyed. The supervising officials were arrested and put to death. Although the statisticians who worked on the census were posthumously rehabilitated, the census results were never published. However, a brief note printed in 1973 in the proceedings of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences reported that, according to estimates computed by Lifshitz, a Soviet demographer, the 1937 general population census was exceptionally accurate. Its margin of error was 0.3 per cent, that is, better than in the most reliable of Soviet censuses, that of 1959.<sup>22</sup>

The potential falsification of data is a complex problem that requires separate analysis. But, despite the possible distortions in some of the material, the 1939 census does make it possible to estimate the minimal population losses during this period.

Our evaluation of demographic losses is based on estimates of the normal demographic growth of each generation of males and females in the period under study. Estimates of the Ukrainian male and female age groups are derived from data on the population sizes in one-year cohorts and mortality tables compiled by Korchak-Chepurkivsky. Birth rates are taken from official reports and estimates. The results have been compared with figures on the size of the population of Ukraine in 1939 based on data contained in Korchak-Chepurkivsky's works.<sup>23</sup> In practical terms, our calculation here repeats our previous evaluations of population losses for the entire USSR.<sup>24</sup> However, several features specific to Ukraine should be pointed out.

In the estimates for the USSR as a whole, we disregarded population migration since so few people emigrated from the Soviet Union. By contrast, migration was important for Ukraine since we are dealing here with population movements confined to the territory of the USSR. Studies have shown that in the period in question in-migration to Ukraine exceeded out-migration from Ukraine by some 600,000 mi-

grants. This number is important for the final result of our estimate of population loss for the republic. Differences in the age structure of migrants is also important to note. Out-migration from Ukraine consisted of three main groups; peasant migrants headed for resettlement in the eastern territories of the USSR; the victims of the anti-kulak campaign who were deported to the northern regions of Russia; and, finally, Jews who left Ukraine to settle in the large urban centres of the Russian republic. The out-migration of all three groups entailed long-term or permanent settlement beyond the borders of Ukraine and typically, involved entire families: men, women, children and the elderly. By contrast, in-migrants to Ukraine came mainly to work in factories, on construction projects and in the mines. These were people of working age, more often males than females. Consequently, even where migratory flows are equal in numbers, the in-migrating group altered the demographic profile of the population, thus affecting an estimate of demographic losses based on an analysis of age structure. Ukraine's net migration can be assumed to consist of men and women aged 20–40 in an approximate ratio of 3 to 2. Obviously, migration introduces a sizeable error into the estimate of the demographic loss.

Another feature of the estimate for Ukraine which differs from an evaluation for the USSR as a whole is the fact that unlike the data of S.A. Novoselskii and V.V. Paevskii, used for the USSR figures, Korchak-Chepurkivsky introduced corrections in his mortality tables of Ukraine for the number of infants counted in the 1926 census. He believed correctly that the younger age groups were underestimated.<sup>25</sup> These corrections to the mortality tables required an appropriate adjustment of the size of the cohort born in 1924–6.

The corrections clearly increased the accuracy of estimates of population loss in Ukraine as compared with similar estimates for the entire USSR. In general, mortality tables and age-group figures in Ukraine were more reliable than the USSR aggregates, even without the corrections, because of greater population density and the higher cultural level. As a result of these adjustments, the estimates for Ukraine are free of sudden, unaccountable fluctuations in the figures of population loss by age groups. The numbers appear quite consistent and fairly reliable. On the other hand, this consistency makes it difficult to compare Ukrainian figures with those for the Soviet Union as a whole.

Similar computations were made by M. Ptukha in his projections of Ukraine's population growth. Ptukha did not accept Korchak-Chepurkivsky's corrections to the 1926 census data on the newlyborn and the infants and he assumed slightly higher birth rates than was actually the case. As a result, in his estimate, losses in the 0–9 age groups were extremely high, while they were absent in the 10–14 group. Apparently,

Ptukha used a somewhat lower mortality figure than that given in the tables for 1925–6, since the natural decrease of children is relatively low in his data. Ptukha's results are close to our estimates concerning groups over 15 years of age.<sup>26</sup>

In obtaining a figure of Ukraine's population losses we have to confront a problem which could be called one of double-counting. Thus, some people who died during the famine are counted as alive in the post-famine period and are included in estimates of the post-1938 natural death rate. If we assume that the losses in Ukraine occurred largely between 1932–5, then this type of error results in an underestimation of population losses by some 280,000 people. That this assumption is warranted can be seen from data showing the sharp drop in the number of farm households in 1933. Five hundred thousand families, or over two million people, disappeared in the space of a year.<sup>27</sup> Here it should also be noted that in 1933, cities in Ukraine, and throughout the USSR, were virtually closed to new entrants. These numbers, therefore, are indeed a measure of population loss and not of resettlement.

School statistics provide evidence to show that the loss of population occurred mainly in 1933. During the early 1930s the number of pupils had been growing steadily as the increasingly sizeable age cohorts born in 1924–8 attained school age, while the smaller groups born during the war graduated. In addition, a much greater proportion of young people were now attending school. Between 1927 and 1932 school enrolment was increasing on an annual basis by 400,000 to 500,000 new pupils and this corresponded rather closely to the size of the age groups in question.<sup>28</sup> But in the autumn of 1933, the number of pupils entering school declined by 230,000 as compared to the previous year, even though age cohort data indicated that there ought to have been an increase as in previous years. Nor was this shortfall compensated in the following year. In 1934, the number of pupils was about 500,000 less than could have been expected from the size of the respective age groups. Significantly, the decline in pupil registrations was experienced only by national groups living in Ukraine's rural areas: primarily Ukrainians, but also Poles, Germans and Moldavians. National groups in the republic who inhabited urban centres, that is, Russians and Jews, sustained only a marginal decline in new pupil group rates in 1933, a rate that by 1935 had returned to its pre-1933 levels.

The figure of several hundred thousand missing pupils correlates closely with our estimate of the losses in age groups born between 1918 and 1928. These data confirm indirectly the assertion that Ukraine's population loss occurred primarily in the period before 1935. We assume that this dating is valid for children and the elderly. The error that arises from counting the same deaths twice (as part of the natural death



rate and part of the population loss) in age groups under 15 and those over 50 in 1939 yields about 180,000 men and 100,000 women. These adjustments have been entered into Table 1.

The loss of population in Ukraine in 1927–38 attained catastrophic proportions. Although 12 million people were born, the population growth was virtually nil. There were 11.2 million deaths, including 6.5 million due to natural mortality, in accordance with the age-group death rates recorded at the beginning of the period. In this way we can affirm that between 1927 and 1938 not less than 4.4 million people perished.

Each of the age groups of Ukraine's population lost immense numbers, tens and even hundreds of thousands. The loss of men was 700,000 greater than that of women. The sweeping scale of the catastrophe can be better grasped by looking at the population loss as related to the size of the population and the total number of deaths, rather than from absolute figures (see Table 2). Ukraine lost one out of ten residents during the twelve years (15 per cent of men and 7 per cent of women). Some age groups, especially men over 50, suffered even worse. All in all, premature deaths accounted for 40 per cent of the total number of deaths in this period. Among children, about one in three died as a consequence of collectivization and the famine. Among the elderly 20 to 30 per cent of the total number of deaths in that group can be thus accounted for. However, in the middle age groups, excessive mortality was much higher than the normal death rate: more than 50 per cent of men and women between 16 and 60 years of age died prematurely.

About one-third of those included in the excess population loss in Ukraine were children born between 1926 and 1939. Of the 12 million born, 1.4 million died. Every tenth newly born child failed to survive. This extremely high infant mortality rate was a direct result of hunger and the declining living conditions in the republic.

It should be noted that the calculations do not offer a breakdown of population loss. The figures refer to the entire population of Ukraine, urban as well as rural, and cover the whole period between 1927 and 1938. Clearly, however, 1933 saw the largest death toll. As mentioned above, not all deaths were from starvation. Weakened by malnutrition, individuals easily succumbed to fatal diseases. Yet while these deaths were not caused by starvation, they too were a result of the grain confiscations.

The heightened rate of population loss reflected also the various campaigns of repression: the annihilation of the kulaks, the arrests of 1930–1, the destruction of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in 1933, the Great Terror of 1936–8 and numerous other blows against the population inflicted by the Soviet police during this period.

Table 1. Population Changes in Ukraine, 1927-38 (in thousands)

	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Population on 17 December 1926	14,184	15,005	29,189*
Those born in 1927-38	6,159	5,869	12,028
Decrease	5,937	4,931	10,870
of which: natural deaths	3,329	3,169	6,498
Losses	2,610	1,762	4,372
including loss of those:			
born before 1927	1,837	1,077	2,914
born after 1927	773	685	1,458
Net migration	350	250	600
Population 1 January 1939	14,754	16,193	30,947

\*With Iu. Korchack-Chepurkivsky's correction for underestimation of the age groups 0-2 by 11.9 per cent.



Table 2. Population Loss in Ukraine as a Proportion of Population Size in 1926 and as Proportion of Total Mortality in 1927-38 (in per cent)

Age	Population Loss as a per cent of Total Population in 1926			Excess Population Loss as a per cent of Total Mortality		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
0-14	11.9*	9.2	10.0*	41.2*	43.2*	42.1*
15-19	13.1	8.1	10.6	65.1	54.1	60.4
20-29	13.8	9.1	11.4	68.6	59.3	64.5
30-39	7.9	7.0	7.4	51.3	47.9	49.6
40-49	13.4	10.0	11.7	59.5	53.6	56.6
50-59	20.7	4.3	12.3	58.7	27.8	49.0
60 +	21.0	8.9	14.5	33.9	19.4	27.2
Total	13.2*	7.2*	10.0*	44.0*	35.7*	40.2*

\*Including those born in 1927-38.

Table 3. Possible Errors in the Estimates of the Population Loss in Ukraine  
(in thousands)

Error due to the use of 1925–6 mortality tables	400
Error in estimated birth rate	+500
	200
Error in the population counts of the 1926 general census	–400
as compared with 1939 census	+200
Errors due to innaccuracy in age groupings	100
Errors due to double-counting of mortality in post-1935 period*	–280
Erroneous estimation of migration	+200
	–600
Calculation errors	100
Totals: Possible underestimation of population loss	1,500
Totals: Possible overestimation of population loss	2,080

\*Some of those who died in pre-1935 counted as alive in the post-1935 period and these are included in post-1935 mortality figures.

We have estimated the probable error in our calculations of Ukraine's population loss, which is similar to the margin of error in estimates for the population loss of the Soviet Union as a whole. However, the magnitude of errors may differ. In discussing the accuracy of our calculations, it should be noted that the mortality tables for Ukraine in 1925–6 (used in our calculations) are far more reliable than the figures for the USSR as a whole. Assuming that for the Soviet Union this error was probably 4 per cent, it is likely therefore that Korchak-Chepurkivsky's tables understate the death rate by 400,000 in this period.

A comparison of official statistics on the natural movement of the population for the years 1927–31 with the figures obtained by Korchak-Chepurkivsky reveals a high degree of similarity in the results obtained. Thus we see that the mortality tables compiled during this relatively tranquil period reflected quite accurately the mortality rate and one cannot speak of excess mortality in this period. In 1938–9 mortality rate in Ukraine was significantly lower in all age groups than the rate recorded in 1925–6. This decline was probably present as early as 1937 and even 1936. It is possible that the real death rate in those years was

even lower than in 1938 because of the advanced mortality of the elderly in the famine years.

Unfortunately, mortality tables for 1939 are unavailable for Ukraine, but Korchak-Chepurkivsky describes them on two occasions, comparing them with the theoretical constructs of Ptukha and A. Khomenko.<sup>29</sup> From his description, one can infer that the mortality of infants under one and those of one-year olds was close to the 1926 level. For the 1–5 age group, it was slightly reduced. For those aged 5–15, mortality had decreased by almost one-half. Among men aged 15–65, the death rate dropped by less than 20 to 30 per cent, and for women aged 15–65, by more than 20 to 30 per cent. The mortality of elderly men and women declined. Given that most of the mortality decrease was contributed by the middle aged, and mainly by women, it must have been less than 10 per cent of the total rate, totalling some 200,000 people in the three-four year period. For most generations, excess mortality in the total number of deaths in this twelve-year period was 50–60 per cent. Only in the oldest and youngest age groups was the proportion of excess mortality somewhat less. Throughout Ukraine four out of ten who died during the 1927–38 period, died prematurely (see Table 2).

An overestimation of the birth rate during the catastrophic years by 10 to 15 per cent could produce an overall error of about 200,000. On the other hand, Ptukha's computations based on a much higher estimate of the birth rate yield a significantly greater loss in the number of children, by at least 500,000.

The accuracy of the 1939 general population census in Ukraine, as well as for the entire USSR, was greater than that of 1926. Given Ukraine's compact population, and in view of the greater accuracy of the 1939 census, one can assume a probable error of 200,000. Also, Korchak-Chepurkivsky adjusted the data on the number of newborns and their mortality. If the adjustment was an error, infant mortality is overestimated by about 400,000.

Errors in age groupings can be estimated by comparing our calculations with those of Ptukha. The discrepancy for age groups of 15 and over was 90,000, and mainly owing to differences in individual age cohort numbers. Net migration was assumed to be 600,000 immigrants. This assumption, however, could have been mistaken, and perhaps no excess immigration actually took place. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the excess of immigrants over emigrants could have been even over 200,000 persons. Errors due to the rounding-off of numbers were approximately the same in Ukraine as for the entire USSR.

The possible errors listed above are maximal (see Table 3). The probability of all the errors, those which result in underestimations and overestimations, occurring at the same time is highly unlikely. In all

likelihood, the real errors are not very significant and partially offset one another.

## NOTES

1. *Istoriia selianstva URSS*, 2 vols. (Kiev 1967), 2: 124.
2. N. A. Ivnitskii, *Klassovaia borba v derevne i likvidatsiia kulachestva kak klassa* (Moscow 1972), 71–2.
3. V. P. Danilov, *Sovetskaia dokolkhoznaia derevnia*, 2 vols. (Moscow 1979), 2: 348.
4. Ibid., 314.
5. S. V. Kulchitskii, *Vnutrennie resursy sotsialisticheskoi industrializatsii SSR (1927–1937)* (Kiev 1979), 120.
6. V. A. Sidorov, “Likvidatsiia v SSSR kulachestva kak klass,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7 (1968): 28.
7. I. Trifonov, *Ocherki istorii klassovoi borby v SSSR v gody NEPA* (Moscow 1960), 249.
8. *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii selskogo khoziaistva v soiuznykh respublikakh* (Moscow 1963), 183.
9. Ivnitskii, *Klassovaia borba*, 330.
10. *Leninskii kooperativnyi plan i borba partii za ego osushchestvlenie* (Moscow 1969), 108, 121; Ivnitskii, *Klassovaia borba*, 245, 292, 298–9, 330.
11. Ivnitskii, *Klassovaia borba*, 292.
12. *Voprosy agrarnoi istorii* (Vologda 1968), 58; Ivnitskii, *Klassovaia borba*, 298–9, 346.
13. Ivnitskii, *Klassovaia borba*, 238–9.
14. Kulchitskii, *Vnutrennie resursy*, 127.
15. Livestock herd, herd losses and fodder grain consumption are from N. Jasny, *Socialized Agriculture of the USSR* (Stanford 1949), 752–60. It is assumed that the army and urban centres consumed about 20 per cent of fodder procured by the state and the estimate is thus reduced by 20 million centners. See Ibid, 752–60, 786, 797.
16. Some of the documents were published in Ol. Kalynyk, *Communism: The Enemy of Mankind* (London 1955).
17. *Pryrodnyi rukh naselennia Ukrainy v 1929 r.* (Kharkiv 1930), 12–18.
18. *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda. SSSR (svodnyi tom)* (Moscow 1962), 54–71, 211–25; *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda. Ukrainskaia SSR* (Moscow 1963), 32–43.

19. See M. Maksudov, "Geografiia goloda 1933 goda," *SSSR: Vnutrennie protivorechiia*, no. 7 (1983): 5–17.
20. Trifonov, *Ocherki*, 263.
21. See M. Maksudov, "Demohrafichni vtraty naselennia Ukrainy v 1927–38 rokakh," *Suchasnist*, no. 10 (1983): 32–43.
22. *Demograficheskie tetrazy*, vypusk 8 (Kiev 1973), 329.
23. Iu. A. Korchak-Chepurkovskii, *Izbrannye demograficheskie issledovania* (Moscow 1970), 303, 315.
24. M. Maksudov, "Losses Suffered by the Population of the USSR 1918–1958," in *Samizdat Register II*, ed. R. Medvedev (London 1981), 220–76; M. Maksudov, "Poteri naseleniia SSSR v 1930–38 gg," *SSSR: Vnutrennie protivorechiia*, no. 5 (1982): 104–51.
25. Korchak-Chepurkovskii, *Isbrannye*, 301–2.
26. *Ibid.*, 306.
27. V. Holubnychy, "The Causes of the Famine of 1932–1933," *Meta*, no. 2 (1979): 22–5.
28. *Narodne hospodarstva URSR* (Kiev 1935), 533.
29. Korchak-Chepurkovskii, *Izbrannye*, 303, 315.





# THE FAMINE OF 1933: A SURVEY OF THE SOURCES

*James E. Mace*

Upon hearing of our discussions, any person hitherto unfamiliar with the topic might well ask: How could something of such magnitude have happened without my already knowing of it? This question is not only legitimate; no critically thinking individual could fail to ask it. As historians, it is our duty to ask it and provide a credible answer or answers. If we fail to do so, we betray our calling.

Within this question there are really two separate queries, only one will be addressed here. We leave to others the problem of the famine's concealment through official denials of its existence and disinformation spread with the connivance of certain members of the Western press.<sup>1</sup> Here our concern is with the deeper and more fundamental question of epistemology: Did it really happen? How and what do we know?

As every reader of Agatha Christie knows, murder is easy; the challenge is not to get caught, that is, in concealment. To give the devil his due, Stalin was a master of concealment, such a master that we are still trying to catch him half a century later. How, then, shall we go about it?

Let us begin with the tracks left by the suspect. Here we have three converging trails: first, the Soviet Ukrainian press of the period; second, the structure of the population left behind; and third, the post-Stalinist official revelations.

The single most important source for the study of the Ukrainian famine

is the official Soviet press of the period, particularly the Soviet Ukrainian press. This might seem surprising to anyone who has ever picked up one of these papers, because the press was itself a means of concealment and propaganda. Day after day the reader of the two daily newspapers of the Communist Party and Soviet state in Ukraine, *Komunist* and *Visti VUTsVK* saw photographs of smiling collective farmers sharing the fruits of Stalin's "socialist construction" and committing themselves to new exertions on behalf of the new age of progress and plenty. Even at a distance of fifty years, one can well imagine the bitter irony felt by any person who saw happy and prosperous Ukrainian villagers in the newspaper and saw those same villagers dead and dying of starvation when he put the paper down. Any fool could see what a pack of lies the newspapers were printing. How can we begin a search for truth by reading newspapers so full of propaganda and falsehood?

The answer lies in the fact that even the most tightly controlled and cynically run press has to provide something more than propaganda. Even if everyday reality is not admitted, some sort of mythology has to be created to explain away what every reader can see with his own eyes. More importantly, the press must serve as a means of transmitting information necessary to the functioning of society: orders, decisions, proclamations, exhortations, and threats against those who fail to do what the government requires of them. Every government requires a medium through which such information can be channelled to its subjects or else it would cease functioning as a state. In modern society, it is the press which plays this role.

It is through the official Soviet press that we can see to what degree the state had foreknowledge of the famine, how the state responded to this knowledge, what measures it took to exacerbate the famine, what political tensions were produced among various state authorities, and how these tensions were resolved. It does not give us a full picture of what happened and why, but it gives us the essential prerequisite for further knowledge.

In order to begin the history of the famine itself, we may turn to the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference, held in Kharkiv in July 1932. At that moment, on the eve of the 1932 harvest, Soviet Ukraine's top officials discussed with some frankness the situation in the countryside. Stalin's personal representatives, Viacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, were present, and it can safely be assumed that Ukrainian officials saw this as a way of addressing Stalin himself. In speeches published in the press, Mykola Skrypnyk, Commissar of Education and Soviet Ukraine's political strongman; Stanislav Kosior, First Secretary of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine; Kharkiv oblast party

committee secretary Roman Terekhov; and others pointed out that the area sown was less than it had been in the preceding year, when the grain quota set by Moscow had not been met. Skrypnyk went so far as to state that he had seen villages where everything edible had been taken away and the inhabitants had nothing to live on. The quotas had been relaxed somewhat from the preceding year, but further relaxation was clearly necessary. Molotov and Kaganovich responded that no further relaxation of the quota would be permitted. In essence, Stalin's representatives were being told that the quotas could not be met and that the only way to approach it would be to seize the entire crop, and these representatives were responding in essence that this would have to be done. These discussions were published in the press.<sup>2</sup> They show that the highest officials of the Soviet Union were warned that famine would come about and refused to take any steps to head off the situation.

Measures were announced in the press which could not but exacerbate the situation. The law of 7 August 1932, on socialist property provided for the execution of anyone stealing food from the collective farm. The Soviet Ukrainian decree of 6 December 1932, establishing a blacklist (*chorna doshka*) of whole villages for sabotaging the grain procurements campaign, was also announced in the Soviet Ukrainian press.<sup>3</sup> Decrees against the "wilful slaughter of livestock" would hardly have been necessary if livestock were not being slaughtered. Press accounts of "kulak sabotage" and "kulak terrorism" against Communist activists in the countryside undoubtedly provided a biased portrait, but at least they tell us something about the scope of rural resistance. One may also trace the tenor of Soviet policy in the countryside by noting whether press editorials dealt more with "Right opportunism," that is, accusations that local officials were being too lenient in their approach to the peasantry, or "Leftist distortions," that is, being too harsh. The fact that "Right opportunism" almost completely replaced "Leftist distortions" in the official vocabulary at the height of the famine is itself damning evidence of the government's determination to squeeze even more produce from the starving villagers, as are the almost daily editorials exhorting local officials to procure grain with "Bolshevik resolve" and condemning those whose "resolve" was found wanting.

The progress of the procurements campaign was reported daily. A whole mythology was created to explain what was never mentioned, the fact that those urban inhabitants officially entitled to food rations had very little to eat and that those without ration cards were dying. There were "difficulties" because "kulaks" were hoarding grain (this a full year and a half after whatever there was of a relatively wealthy

village stratum had been physically removed from the villages), and it was the duty of good Soviet citizens to uncover the "kulak pits" which were allegedly full of concealed food.

Even if the famine itself was not mentioned in the press, official reactions to Soviet Ukraine's failure to provide Moscow even more grain certainly were. The decree of the All-Union Central Committee of 24 January 1933, was published in part in *Bilshovyk Ukrainy*, the official journal of the Ukrainian Central Committee, in 1933, stating that the highest political authority in the Soviet Union considered it an established fact that Ukrainian Communist authorities had failed to perform the task required of them in obtaining grain and appointing directly officials to Ukraine, giving them an explicit mandate to extract more produce from the Ukrainian countryside.<sup>4</sup> (It was only after this, in the spring of 1933, that the famine reached its height.) Thus, the official Soviet press provides us with the evidence that is crucial in determining which component of the Soviet state was most directly responsible for creating the famine artificially. That body is the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party and its General Secretary, Joseph Stalin. So much for the evidence left at the scene.

Let us now examine the marks left on the victim, the population of those areas affected by the famine. Since we cannot take our own measurements, we must rely on those produced by the Soviet government itself. And since that government denied ever doing what we suspect it of having done, there are quite obvious problems with the figures we have to use, if only because we have none better.

The figures we have in mind are those relating to the size and structure of the population of the Soviet Union. If we look at them closely, a great deal about the scope of the famine may be learned. Even Soviet demographers have been struck by the fact that certain groups suffered a catastrophic decline in numbers over the course of the 1930s and felt the need to provide some sort of explanation. For example, V.I. Kozlov attempted to explain the decline in the number of Kazakhs (21.9 per cent) and Ukrainians (9.9 per cent) between 1926 and 1939 as follows:

Judging by isolated bits of data, the decline in mortality during the period of the reconstruction of the national economy slowed somewhat and showed an uneven tempo in different regions of the country. Thus, the decline in (the number of) cattle in Kazakhstan in 1930 and *the failed harvest of 1932 in Ukraine probably even caused a very temporary rise in mortality.*<sup>5</sup> (Our italics)

Since such a "temporary rise in mortality" is the only explanation given for the fact that there were 3.1 million fewer Ukrainians in the

USSR in 1939 than there had been in 1926 (an absolute drop of 9.9 per cent), this would seem to imply a death rate of over twice that amount when what we know of the natural rate of population growth for the period is factored in. Kozlov's remarks would seem to represent a masterpiece of understatement.

Information available from the census deserves to be examined at more length. First of all, the 1926 and 1959 censuses both provide a wealth of information, and there is no reason to believe that they are anything other than what they appear to be, censuses as accurate and complete as Soviet statistical science could make them. The 1939 census, however, is a completely different matter. In the first place, it is not a census at all, merely a single slim volume summarizing a census, the bulk of which remains unpublished to this day. Even this is suspect because of the circumstances surrounding the suppressed Soviet census of 1937. In that year, the Soviet press announced that the officials in charge of preparing the census had been "exposed" as members of a plot to discredit Soviet achievements by allegedly "diminishing" the population.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the top census officials were shot for not finding enough people. Since their successors were well aware of the pitfalls that might befall them, it is reasonable to assume that they would have made every effort to make their totals as high as possible, even if this meant inflating the figures somewhat.

Up to 1931, administrative estimates of population growth were published in the journal *Statystyka Ukrainy*, and these estimates, based on the observations of local Soviet officials, are considered quite reliable.<sup>7</sup> They show us that the natural rate of population growth was increasing, although the rate of increase was declining with each year, because people were leaving the countryside, where the rate of population growth was much higher than average, for the cities, where population growth tended to be lower. Even if we subtract a quarter of a million persons who probably perished in consequence of the so-called "liquidation of the kulaks as a class" before the famine, we arrive at an estimate of 33,865,000 Ukrainians in the USSR in 1931.<sup>8</sup> We do not have comparable data on the natural rate of population growth for the recovery period after 1933, but we can assume that it was no lower than that recorded in the late 1950s, 1.34 per cent per annum, and add 250,000 to allow for Ukrainian purge victims so as to arrive at a post-famine (early 1934) population of 26,527,000.<sup>9</sup> The result, a loss of some 7,338,000 people, might be lowered further in order to account for the fact that some persons counted as Ukrainians in 1926 were counted as Russians in 1939.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, a significant conservative bias has been built into this calculation because it does not take into account the likelihood of the 1939 census figures being inflated,



the (admittedly small) number of Ukrainians born in 1932–3, or the fact that Ukrainians, being concentrated in the countryside where the natural rate of population growth was always higher than in the cities, probably had a natural rate of population growth higher than the republic figures used to calculate the period 1926–31.

The use of territorial figures, comparing the number of residents of the Ukrainian SSR in 1926 with the number of 1939, would yield a significantly lower figure, but such a figure would certainly be too low because of the massive campaign of resettling the Ukrainian countryside after the famine by bringing in peasants from other Union Republics. Yet, even on this basis, Maksudov has calculated no fewer than 4.5 million inhabitants of Ukraine perished in the famine, and if we take into account the fact that the equally devastated North Caucasus had a large Ukrainian minority, it seems likely that at least five million Ukrainians perished.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the 1939 census employed different criteria of national identification than did the 1926 census could hardly have diminished the number of Ukrainians counted by much more than two million. Consequently, a conservative “ballpark estimate” of the number of Ukrainians who perished during the famine would be five to seven million, recognizing that the true figure could easily be higher.

The 1959 census cannot help us to determine the number of persons who died from starvation in 1933, but it can help us determine where they died, thereby indicating the geography of the famine. Maksudov's research analyzes the age structure of rural females by oblast, based on the 1959 census figures. Since fertility declines markedly and infants are among the first to perish in a famine, one looks for oblasts where the number of rural females of the age group born during or immediately before 1933 is abnormally small. Maksudov points out that one finds this anomaly in the population age structure throughout the territory of pre-1939 Soviet Ukraine, the largely Cossack Don and Kuban territories, the Crimea, Kazakhstan, and to a less marked degree in parts of the lower and middle Volga Basin and one Western Siberian oblast.<sup>12</sup>

We may safely exclude some of these areas from our analysis of 1933. Kazakhstan was devastated by mass starvation beginning in 1930 because of the slaughter of livestock accompanying forced collectivization of the Kazakhs, Muslim herdsmen, dependent on livestock for their sustenance, lost a greater proportion of their population than even the Ukrainians, but the catastrophe they suffered began earlier than that of 1933, came about for different reasons, and thus may be excluded from our analysis.<sup>13</sup> Western Siberia was a region in which collectivization was carried out with extreme brutality under Stalin's personal supervision; indeed, the application of “administrative measures” to the peasantry



became known as the "Ural-Siberian method" of collectivization. This too would indicate that infant mortality may be attributed to an earlier period, and this area may also be excluded from our analysis.

Thus, we are left with Ukraine, the Cossack territories along its eastern border, the Crimea, and parts of the Volga basin. All these territories contained groups which Stalin could quite plausibly consider hostile; indeed the Crimean Tatars and Volga (along with Ukraine's) Germans were later deported *en masse*, and a number of entire Kuban Cossack settlements were deported even before the famine. All these groups had shown exceptional hostility to the Bolsheviks immediately after 1917 and all had strenuously resisted forced collectivization. Yet, none had been as big a thorn in Stalin's side as the Ukrainians, who had established an independent state in 1918 and even after the imposition of Soviet rule evolved in the most self-assertive national Communist regime in the Soviet Union's history.

Analysis of the 1959 census shows that the famine stopped precisely at the border with Russia proper. The most striking difference is observed between the contiguous oblasts of Kharkiv on the Ukrainian side of the border and Belgorod on the Russian side. Both oblasts have identical weather patterns, a population mix including both Russians and Ukrainians, the same pattern of crops planted and pretty much the same lifestyle in the villages. Yet, Maksudov's analysis shows that, while there is demographic evidence of extraordinary devastation by famine in Kharkiv oblast, there is no evidence of any unusual mortality in Belgorod oblast. This would indicate that the famine stopped at the Russo-Ukrainian border. If there had been any sort of crop failure or even if the famine had been brought about for purely economic motives, this would make little sense. The famine thus would seem to have been brought about and geographically focused so as to affect only those areas the government considered troublesome. The statistics enable us to learn the raw numbers of how many died but also provide us powerful evidence concerning why the government saw fit to create the situation in which they died.

In dealing with Soviet figures, every researcher of the famine has encountered a mortality figure of uncertain provenance, the repeated claim by various individuals that a secret Soviet statistic indicates that ten million died in the famine. The figure was first published in the U.S. as early as July 1933, just as the famine was ending, and in 1935 Adam Tawdul published an account claiming that Mykola Skrypnyk and Vsevolod Balytsky had told him that eight to nine million persons had perished in Ukraine and the North Caucasus and one to two million in the Volga Basin.<sup>14</sup> Psychiatrist W.H. Gannt, who spent much time in the 1930s in the Soviet Union studying with Pavlov, reported that

Soviet public health officials had told him that ten and perhaps as many as fifteen million had died in the famine.<sup>15</sup> Later John Kolasky, a Ukrainian Canadian who studied in Kiev during the 1960s, wrote that a prominent Ukrainian literary figure had cited the ten million figure at a 1956 meeting of the Union of Writers in Ukraine and attributed it to a secret document of the Ukrainian Central Committee.<sup>16</sup> The same figure also appeared from time to time in Ukrainian *samvydav* or unofficial publications.<sup>17</sup> There seems never to have been any precise indication of where the figure came from, beyond the usual vague references to the Central Committee or the secret police, and none of the post-Stalinist Soviet authors who cite the figure claims to have personally seen the document in question. Yet if we accept the "ballpark estimate" of seven million Ukrainian dead in the famine, ten million would seem quite reasonable when we add the Germans, Cossacks (particularly Don Cossacks), Tatars, Jewish agricultural settlers, Russians residing in famine stricken areas, and others who undoubtedly perished along with Ukrainians. There are other, lower figures cited by persons who also made some claim to inside knowledge, but the extraordinary frequency with which the ten million figure appears obliges us to take seriously the possibility that it did in fact originate in Soviet official circles, even if we cannot claim to know with certainty.

After Stalin's death, much was made of "grave injustices" committed under the "cult of personality." However, most of the Khrushchev era revelations dealt with what had been done to party members, not what had been done to whole nations, except, of course, for certain small groups which had been exiled from their homelands *en masse*, and not even all of these "punished peoples." Mass victims of processes which created the basic structure of the Soviet Union as we know it today remained unmentionable. Thus, collectivization and dekulakization might occasionally be admitted to have claimed an excessive number of victims, but neither could be questioned as such. The mass destruction of Ukrainian elites and the prohibition of any sort of national self-assertion were cornerstones of "Soviet patriotism" and Russian dominance, pillars of the system and hence unmentionable beyond the limited rehabilitations of certain party figures, like Skrypnyk.

Khrushchevian historiography referred to the famine only euphemistically, admitting to "distortions" and even a "grave situation" connected with "a severe shortfall of edible produce" due to an inadequate harvest and "the incorrect planning and carrying out of the grain procurement campaign."<sup>18</sup> Such euphemisms actually admit a great deal when we combine them with everything else we know. For example, a 1960 publication of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Trade tells us that the Soviet Union exported 1,727,407 tonnes of grain in 1932

and 1,683,880 tonnes in 1933, while importing (mainly for the Soviet Far East, transport difficulties making it easier to buy grain from other countries than to ship it overland from the European USSR) 184,797 tonnes in 1932 and 12,833 tonnes in 1933. Simple subtraction yields a net balance of grain exports amounting to 1,542,710 tonnes in 1932 and 1,670,997 in 1933.<sup>19</sup> This means that during the famine the Soviet Union annually exported nearly a quarter of a tonne of grain for every Ukrainian who starved to death. Obviously, the harvest was inadequate to meet state quotas; this can be seen from the fact that the quotas were not met in spite of the most determined efforts. Nor would there have been mass starvation had the state's demand for grain been relaxed: there were poorer harvests in Ukraine in 1927 and 1934, but no mass starvation in those years.<sup>20</sup> What the phrase "incorrect planning and carrying out of the grain procurement campaign" really means is that the government could have prevented mass starvation if Moscow had acceded to the repeated demands of Ukrainian officials to allow the villagers to consume more of what they had themselves produced. To put it another way, the government caused the mass starvation by taking from the countryside the grain that was needed to sustain the population.

When one reads the works produced by Soviet historians, it is vital to understand how the state requires that history be written. Soviet historians must adhere to the dictates of *partiinost* (party-mindedness), which means that their work must adhere to an official interpretation of events. This does not mean that Soviet historiography is worthless, or that Soviet historians, even those who deal with the most politically charged questions of post-revolutionary history, have no disagreements. But it does mean that there is always a more or less restrictive party line on the interpretation of major historical events, and no Soviet historian is allowed to deviate from it.

Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's abuses opened a door to the discussion of at least some of those abuses. If euphemism was as far as the historian was allowed to go in describing what happened, he was allowed to go much further in detailing the context in which it took place. The considerable Soviet literature on collectivization has revealed a wealth of information hitherto unknown to scholars. On collectivization in Ukraine, both monographs and collections of documents are extremely useful in understanding the structures of Soviet power in the countryside and much about how those structures functioned. For example, a collection of documents on the Ukrainian *komnezamy*, (Committees of Poor Peasants—KNS),<sup>21</sup> contains a report of the organization's activities in 1932, which declared that in the crucial 1932 procurement campaign:

KNS members took the lead in procuring bread for the state, exposed and mercilessly combatted the manoeuvres of the kulaks and counter-revolutionary elements to undermine the grain procurement campaign, organized the collective-farm and poor-middle peasant masses for the onslaught against the kulak-upper stratum of the village in order to demolish kulak sabotage of the grain procurement campaign.<sup>22</sup>

The same document goes on to give examples of how the *komnezamy* had organized brigades “to liquidate the gap in the grain procurement campaign” which had “uncovered the kulak pits of grain.”<sup>23</sup> Since any upper stratum of the village which might plausibly be dubbed “kulak” in any socio-economic sense had been expelled well before the beginning of 1932, months before the procurement campaign mentioned in the report, the “kulak pits” could only refer to small amounts of grain concealed by poorer peasants in the only way available to them, by burial.

Some of the more obscure monographs also provide valuable information: I.I Slynko’s 1961 monograph on machine-tractor stations in Ukraine, for instance, contains a wealth of detail on measures taken to extract grain. It is Slynko, for example, who reveals that the blacklist system, initially announced for only six villages, was applied to eighty-two entire raions within one week of its passage, that thousands of local officials and collective farm heads were removed for their failure to extract the desired quantities of grain from the villagers over whom they held sway, and that thousands of villagers unable to meet the quotas had all their property seized and sold off as a warning to others.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, it was not a historian who made the most damning revelation of all. In the spring of 1964, Roman Terekhov, a Ukrainian oblast party secretary removed in Stalin’s January 1933 takeover of the Ukrainian Central Committee, was able to publish in *Pravda* the story of how he had told Stalin personally about the mass starvation in Ukraine and that Stalin had accused him of telling stories.<sup>25</sup> Since Stalin had ample means at his disposal to verify or refute what Terekhov had told him, and, as we shall see, even the Smolensk police reports mentioned the existence of Ukrainian refugees from the famine, we can be certain that Stalin was aware that the warnings enunciated at the All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July had been accurate and sent his own clients to Ukraine in January 1933 fully cognizant of the fact that mass starvation had begun. Therefore, Stalin knew that his mandate to extract even more grain from the Ukrainian countryside could only lead to starvation on an even greater scale. Stalin deliberately took this action, knowing that mass death would result.

Our survey of Soviet sources would not be complete if we failed to



make reference to the fact that the Soviet Union is a country where that which proposes to be literature is often more forthcoming than that which purports to be history. Those who write fiction for publication in the USSR are as much employees of the state as are those who write history. To state this is not to imply that we can dismiss their work any more than we can dismiss the work of Soviet historians, but it does serve to place it in perspective. Everything published in the Soviet Union must adhere to the party line, and works of historical fiction must be "historically correct," that is, they must adhere to the party line on the events they depict. But writers may, under the cloak of fictionalizing the past, give human content to matters historians deal with only euphemistically. In the Khrushchev era, much was made of "violations of socialist legality," but it was the writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn who gave the euphemism content in his *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

The most important "fictional" work on the Ukrainian famine is Ivan Stadniuk's *People Are Not Angels*, first published in the Leningrad journal *Neva* in 1962 and soon thereafter brought out in book form in Russian, Ukrainian and English. The fact that control over literature is much stricter in Ukraine than in Moscow and Leningrad explains why the first version of this Ukrainian writer's work could only have appeared in Russia. Stadniuk's novel, set in the district of Vinnytsia, attributes the famine more to bad harvest than to procurements, but its description of the spring of 1933 is one of mass starvation:

Hunger; a terrible, soul-chilling word of darkness. Those who have never experienced it cannot imagine what suffering hunger causes. There is nothing worse for the man—the head of the family—than the sense of his own helplessness in the face of his wife's prayers, when she cannot find food for her hungry children. There is nothing more terrible for the mother than the sight of her emaciated enfeebled children who through hunger have forgotten to smile.

If it were only for a week or a month, but it is for many months that most of the local families have nothing to put on the table. All the cellars were swept clean, not a single hen remained in the village: even the beetroot seeds had been consumed. Everyone was waiting for the Spring as if they never waited for anything. They were waiting for the time when the earth in the gardens was unfrozen so that they could dig up the plots where potatoes had grown last year in the hope of finding some left behind. They were waiting for the live bark and the swelling buds on the lime trees. And later on there would be nettles and goosefoot and sorrel. They were hoping that nature would give at least some help to man.

But the Spring suddenly withdrew.

The first to die from hunger were the men. Later on the children, and last of all, the women died. But before they died, people often lost their senses and ceased to be human beings.<sup>27</sup>

Stadniuk, of course, obeys the unspoken dictum that whatever is presented can never go beyond the point where the situation depicted could no longer be explained away as a local aberration. And no subsequent officially sanctioned work has been able to go quite as far as this in describing what the Ukrainian famine was really like. The famine along the Volga, where the situation was less catastrophic and the local aberration argument has at least some plausibility, and has been somewhat more acceptable as a topic for Soviet writers.<sup>28</sup>

Last to be mentioned among the Soviet sources are archival documents which have passed into Western hands during or immediately after the Second World War. By far the most important cache of Soviet archival documents is the Smolensk oblast archive, taken from the Soviet Union by the Germans and from the latter by the Americans. Merle Fainsod's classic study of the Smolensk archive shows that, although Smolensk itself was untouched by the famine, one may find its indirect reflection in police reports on the response of local peasants to the arrival of those who had managed to flee the Ukrainian famine as well as in a confidential circular mandating the recruitment of Jews for Jewish agricultural settlements in Ukraine which had been depopulated during the famine.<sup>29</sup>

Other Soviet archival documents in the West are far less comprehensive and of less certain provenance than the Smolensk archive. A series of documents from Chornukhyi raion in Poltava oblast were published in the 1950s, and among these documents there is a secret directive ordering local authorities not to place on trial persons suspected of cannibalism, but rather to hand them over to the secret police.<sup>30</sup> Documents from Krynychanskyi raion, near Dnipropetrovsk, include a partial village death record from the famine period and summaries of local official discussions concerning grain procurement.<sup>31</sup>

What, then, can we conclude from the tracks left by the suspect? 1) On the eve of the famine leading members of the Ukrainian Soviet government pleaded for a relaxation of the grain quota on the grounds of severe food shortages already occurring, and Stalin's representatives were warned of impending disaster. 2) Although the harvest was below normal, huge amounts of grain were extracted from Ukraine. 3) The amount of grain exported during the famine would have been sufficient to avert any starvation, which means the famine could have been stopped at any moment by the simple cessation of grain exports, without any lessening of food supplies to any other sector of Soviet society.



4) Official Soviet demographic data indicate that millions of Ukrainians died because of the famine and that deaths corresponded to internal Soviet political boundaries, indicating that the famine was geographically focused for political ends. 5) Stalin was personally told of widespread starvation even before the famine reached its height. 6) In spite of this knowledge, Stalin appointed new men to the Ukrainian Central Committee with a clear mandate to extract grain in an even more vigorous manner than had been done previously. 7) Soviet historians and writers have admitted that the famine took place, albeit in a limited manner, and they provide much detail on how it was brought about by the state. 7) Official crop statistics indicate that the Ukrainian SSR had survived worse crop years before and after the famine with no evidence of starvation, which means that the famine would not have taken place without official policies of extracting grain from the countryside.

This is a good deal to begin with. Yet, as historians we must know as much as is knowable. For this we must leave the Soviet sources and examine the witnesses.

A number of Western journalists reported the famine, although most did not. French newspapers, *Le Matin* in particular, published several excellent articles about the famine.<sup>32</sup> Among those who did report it to the English-speaking world, William Henry Chamberlin of the *Christian Science Monitor* and Malcolm Muggeridge of the *Manchester Guardian* both published books in which the Ukrainian famine is a prominent topic.<sup>33</sup> Soon after leaving the Soviet Union, Chamberlin published a series of articles under the heading "Russia—With Benefit of Censor."<sup>34</sup> In the second installment of the series, he described how the Soviet government "employed famine as an instrument of national policy on an unprecedented scale and in an unprecedented way." One thing he saw had particularly struck him:

I shall never forget a scene which I witnessed in a Ukrainian village named Zhuke, which lies some 15 miles to the north of Poltava. The president of the local collective farm and a state agronom[ist], or agricultural expert, were accompanying me on visits to a number of peasant houses. So long as my companions chose the houses to be visited I found myself invariably meeting local Communists or udarniki (shock-brigade workers), with pictures of Lenin, Stalin and Kalinin on the walls and a fairly contented tale of their experiences.

I suddenly picked out a house at random and went into it with my companions. It was a typical Ukrainian peasant hut, with thatched roof, earth floor, benches running around the walls, an oven and a rickety looking

bed as the chief articles of furniture. The sole occupant was a girl of 15, huddled up on the bench. She answered a few simple questions briefly, in a flat, dull voice.

“Where is your mother?”

“She died of hunger last winter.”

“Have you any brothers or sisters?”

“I had four. They all died, too.”

“When?”

“Last winter and spring.”

“And your father?”

“He is working in the fields.”

“Does he belong to the collective farm?”

“No, he is an individual peasant.”

So here was one man—his name was Savchenko—whose passive stubbornness defied even Kalinin’s “ruthless school,” who refused to go into a collective farm, even after almost all the members of his family had perished.

My companions, the president of the collective farm and the state agrom[ist], had nothing to say. Smooth-tongued officials in Moscow might assure inquiring visitors that there was no famine, only little food difficulties here and there, due to the wicked machinations of the kulaks. Here on the spot in Zhuke, as in a dozen other Ukrainian and North Caucasian villages I visited, the evidence of large-scale famine was so overwhelming, was so unanimously confirmed by the peasants that the most “hard-boiled” local official could say nothing in denial.<sup>35</sup>

Muggeridge, who was able to board a train to the famine-stricken North Caucasus and Ukraine, reported:

The Ukraine is more a separate country than the North Caucasus. It has a language of its own and an art of its own; southern rather than eastern, with white, good houses and easy-going people. Even now you can see that it has been used to abundance. There is nothing pinchback about the place; only, as in the North Caucasus, the population is starving. “Hunger” was the word I heard most. Peasants begged a lift on the train from one station to another, sometimes their bodies swollen up—a disagreeable sight—from lack of food . . . the little towns and villages seemed just numb and the people in too desperate a condition even actively to resent what had happened.<sup>36</sup>

Even Walter Duranty, whose articles in the *New York Times* did much to discredit what he referred to as the “famine scare,” told the British

Embassy in Moscow that as many as ten million might have perished in the famine.<sup>37</sup>

Other reports were published as well.<sup>38</sup> The often and deservedly maligned Hearst newspaper chain (it was in reference to this chain that the term "yellow journalism" was coined) belatedly published (or reprinted) a series of accounts in 1935, including the series of Thomas Walker, which contains some of the best photographs of the famine available.<sup>39</sup>

The most discerning of those who wrote about the famine at the time was Dr. Ewald Ammende, Secretary General of the European Council of Nationalities and head of the Vienna-based Interconfessional Relief Council established by Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna. Ammende was one of the very few outside observers to recognize a connection between the famine and the reversal of Soviet nationalities policy, which accompanied it. Based on Western press sources, his book is a monument to how much was knowable about the famine immediately after it happened.<sup>40</sup>

We would expect the fullest coverage of the famine to be given by the non-Soviet Ukrainian language press, and we are not disappointed. Perhaps the best coverage was found in *Dilo*, the leading Ukrainian-language daily in Lviv, the leading city of what was then Polish-ruled Western Ukraine. The famine was also covered extensively in the North American Ukrainian-language press, especially by *Ukrainskyi holos* and *Novyi shliakh* in Canada as well as by *Svoboda* in the United States.

Of the European governments, Germany seems to have been best informed about the famine, thanks to the German Drusag agricultural concession and to the fact that German consulates had been established not only in the Ukrainian capital (Kharkiv), but also in the three largest provincial centres (Kiev, Vinnytsia and Chernihiv). The three provincial consuls estimated that in their combined jurisdictions, which had a total population of about twelve million, about two and a half million persons had perished.<sup>41</sup> If we apply their observation to the whole population of Ukraine, we arrive at a figure of 6.4 million.

Other foreigners who travelled to the Soviet Union at this time also witnessed the famine at various stages. Arthur Koestler, who was in Kharkiv at the time, wrote about it.<sup>42</sup> Carveth Wells, an American traveller, happened to be in Ukraine in July 1932, precisely at the time of the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference, and even at this time witnessed "poverty, filth, disease, and hunger everywhere" and a miserable market where the only item available in any quantity was black bread, produced in a filthy bakery outside of which stood a line of

about two hundred people.<sup>43</sup> From this it is clear that at the time the Ukrainian Communist leadership gave Moscow its first warning of what was to come; anyone could see that complete disaster was not far in the offing.

Persons, who were in one way or another associated with the government that extracted the means of sustenance from the countryside, have also told what they saw and did. In his unofficial memoirs, Khrushchev himself recalled what a Ukrainian oblast party secretary had told him about the famine.<sup>44</sup> Lev Kopelev, the model for the idealistic young Communist Gulag inmate depicted in Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, devoted a chapter of his memoirs to his experiences in the Ukrainian countryside in early 1933.<sup>45</sup> Victor Kravchenko, a high Soviet trade official who defected at the end of the Second World War, had been sent to the Ukrainian countryside to force peasants into the collective farms in 1930 and also witnessed the famine of 1933. His memoir, *I Chose Freedom*, contains much detailed information on collectivization and the famine.<sup>46</sup> After French Communists accused him of lying, Kravchenko successfully sued his detractors for libel, and *I Chose Justice*, based on testimony given at the trial, contains further accounts of the Ukrainian famine.<sup>47</sup>

The immense human tragedy of the man-made famine in Ukraine can only truly be understood through the eyes of those who survived it. There can be no doubt about the existence of the famine, about the seemingly endless grain seizures that caused it, or about the tremendous human suffering accompanying it, for anyone who makes even a cursory examination of the testimony of those who survived the terrible winter and spring of 1932–3. As yet there is still time for those wishing to learn the truth of what happened to find survivors in any sizeable community of Ukrainians in North America. But this will not long remain the case. Half a century has already passed since the famine took place, and the number of those who can tell us about it on the basis of what they themselves saw diminishes with the passing of each year. Every witness has a unique story to tell, yet the remarkable consistency of their accounts leaves no doubt that all are based on having lived through a common experience.

Fortunately, many have already told their story. The Democratic Association of Ukrainians Formerly Repressed by the Soviets (DOBRUS in the U.S. and SUZERO in Canada) published an outstanding two-volume collection of eyewitness accounts of the famine and related events, along with various supporting materials, as *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*.<sup>48</sup> A similar organization in Great Britain published a valuable collection in the Ukrainian language as *Moscow's Greatest Crime*.<sup>49</sup> Olexa Woropay's *Ninth Circle*, recently reprinted, is

divided into what the author himself witnessed and what he heard from others.<sup>50</sup> Iuryi Semenko edited *The Year 1933 in Ukraine* from eye-witness accounts previously published in the Munich-based paper *Ukrainskyi selianyn* (Ukrainian Villager).<sup>51</sup> Unpublished memoirs were also collected by private organizations, such as the Ukrainian Cultural Centre (Oseredok) in Winnipeg, and valuable eyewitness materials also are contained in the files of the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, carried out in the early 1950s in Munich and New York.<sup>52</sup> These sources from the 1950s and early 1960s have only recently been tapped by serious scholars.

A number of individuals have published their recollections separately in pamphlet or book form.<sup>53</sup> While these individuals deserve the highest praise for their determination not to let what they witnessed pass unnoticed from the pages of history, we must not delude ourselves into thinking that we have preserved even a fraction of the eye-witness knowledge that is daily slipping through our hands. Only recently have even the smallest of steps been taken in the direction of preserving the living memory of the famine by recording the accounts of eyewitnesses.<sup>54</sup> Sitting across the table from an elderly famine survivor, tape recorder in hand, is far from the most glamorous of occupations, but it is the single most urgent task facing those of us who are seriously committed to the study of the famine of 1933. We must learn from the still infant discipline of oral history and follow the path marked out for us by those who collect oral histories of the Jewish Holocaust and Armenian Massacres.

To conclude: we have many sources for the study of the famine. Based on what we now know, we may with some certainty state what happened, how it was done, and to some extent why it was done. But we historians are detectives for whom the case can never be closed. It is the challenge and curse of our profession that we must attempt to assemble a puzzle from which many of the pieces are missing, and we must continue the search so long as there is a chance of recovering one more hitherto missing piece. We will differ on how the various pieces should be fitted together, but collecting and assembling them is our duty. We owe it to those who perished, to those who survived, and we owe it most of all to that elusive ideal called the Truth.



## NOTES

1. See especially J. W. Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia, 1917 to 1937, A Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty* (Washington 1982), chapter six, "Concealing the Famine, 1932-1934," 133-180. See also M. Carynnyk's essays in this volume; M. B. Kuropas, "American's 'Red Decade' and the Great Famine Cover-Up," in *The Great Famine in Ukraine: The Unknown Holocaust* (Jersey City 1983), 38-45.
2. *Visti VUTsVK*, 6-17 July 1932.
3. *Visti VUTsVK*, 8 December 1932.
4. "Postanova TsK VKP(b) z 24 sichnia 1933 r., ta zavdannia bilshovykiv Ukrainy," *Bilshovyk Ukrainy*, no. 3 (1933): 3-20.
5. V.I. Kozlov, *Natsionalnosti SSSR: Etnodemograficheskii obzor* (Moscow 1975), 153.
6. *Pravda*, 26 September 1937.
7. Reprinted in V.I. Naulko, *Etnichniy sklad naseleennia Ukrainskoi RSR: Statystyko-kartohrafichne doslidzhennia* (Kiev 1965), 84.
8. According to the figures cited by Naulko from *Statystyka Ukrainy*, the natural rates of population growth in the Ukrainian SSR were 2.25 per cent in 1927, 2.15 per cent in 1928, 1.77 per cent in 1929, 1.56 per cent in 1930 and 1.45 per cent in 1931, the latest year for which figures are available until the postwar years.
9. The natural rate of population growth figure is from *ibid.*, 85.
10. On the definitions of nationality employed in these censuses, see Y. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine After World War II* (New Brunswick, NJ 1964), 413-15.
11. M. Maksudov, "Losses Suffered by the Population of the USSR 1918-1958," in *Samizdat Register 2: Voices of the Socialist Opposition in the Soviet Union*, ed. R. Medvedev (London 1981), 232-4.
12. M. Maksudov, "Geografiia goloda 1933 goda," *SSSR: Vnutrenie protivorechiia*, no. 7 (1983): 5-17.
13. On the collectivization famine in Kazakhstan, see M. Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," *Russian Review*, no. 2 (1981): 121-42.
14. *New York World Telegram*, 7 July 1933; *New York American*, 18-19 August 1935.
15. J. Sawka, "American Psychiatrist: Fifteen Million Died in the Thirties Famine," *Ukrainian Quarterly*, no. 1 (1982): 61-7.
16. J. Kolasky, *Two Years in Soviet Ukraine: A Canadian's Personal Account of Russian Oppression and the Growing Opposition* (Toronto 1970), 111.
17. Most recently in Iu. Badz'o, "Zaiavlenie pred. PVS USSR A.F. Vatchenko s predlozheniem obiavit 3-e voskresene marta Dnem nats. traura v



- pamiat zhertv holoda 1933 na Ukraine," *Arkhiv samizdata*, no. 5295. See also V. Marchenko, "Pismo dedu," *Arkhiv samizdata*, no. 3381. By contrast, *The Ukrainian Herald*, Issue 7-8 (Baltimore-Paris-Toronto 1976) cited the lower figure of six million. (The *Herald* is a *samvydav* journal.)
18. Some typical Soviet explanations from the 1960s are: "Finally, the lower number of the village population is connected with the severe shortfall of edible produce in 1931, 1932, and the first half of 1933, which was caused by a poor harvest and the incorrect planning of the grain procurement campaign." *Istoriia selianstva Ukrainskoi RSR*, 2 vols. (Kiev 1967), 2: 175. or, "... great errors and excesses (were) permitted in the carrying out of a number of politico-economic campaigns and especially of the grain procurement campaign.... Party and Soviet leaders in a number of oblasts and raions took the path of naked administrative measures and mass repression." I.F. Ganzha, I.I. Slinko, P.V. Shostak, "Ukrainskoe selo na puti k sotsializmu," in *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii v soiuznykh respublikakh*, ed. V.P. Danilov (Moscow 1963), 199-200. "Serious distortions were permitted in carrying out the grain deliveries. Among collective farms which did not fulfil the grain procurement plan there were collective farms from which all the grain was taken away, supplemental tasks were given, middle peasant farms were treated like kulak farms, and so forth." P.S. Zahorsky, P.K. Stoian, *Narysy istorii Komitetiv nezamozhnykh selian* (Kiev 1960), 145. "Unfortunately, in 1932... a clearly mistaken line was renewed in carrying out the grain procurements.... In many collective farms all the food and even domestic stores of grain were taken, and the distribution of proceeds among the collective farmers failed to take place." S.P. Trapeznikov, *Istoriicheskii opyt KPSS v osushchestvlenii leninskogo kooperativnogo plana* (Moscow 1965), 398, 400. Statements such as these largely ceased to appear in Soviet historical writing after the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers in 1970, when Leonid Brezhnev said, "In the process of collective farm construction we were not free from known errors, but these were the errors of feeling our way, errors caused by a lack of experience. The party itself exposed these errors, spoke openly about them to the people, and corrected them. Unfortunately, to this day one still finds those who love to play up the costs in a great revolutionary event." Cited by A.F. Chmyga, *Kolkhoznoe dvizhenie na Ukraine (1917-29 gg.)*. *Ocherki istorii* (Moscow 1974), 292-3.
  19. *Vneshnaia torgovlia SSSR za 1918-40 gg. Statisticheskii obzor* (Moscow 1960), 144, 360.
  20. Slynko and Shostak, "Ukrainskoe selo," 199.
  21. On these organizations, see J. E. Mace, "The Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian and the Structure of Soviet Rule in the Ukrainian Countryside, 1920-33," *Soviet Studies*, no. 4 (1983): 487-503.

22. *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian Ukrainy (1920–1933)*. Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv (Kiev 1968), 580.
23. *Ibid.*, 581.
24. I. I. Slynko, *Sotsialistychna perebudova i tekhnichna rekonstruktsiia silskoho hospodarstva Ukrainy (1927–1932 rr.)* (Kiev 1961), 281–303.
25. *Pravda*, 26 May 1964.
26. I. Stadnyuk, *People are not Angels* (London 1963), 119.
27. Especially a number of works published by Russian famine survivor from the Volga Basin, Mikhail Alekseev. For a brief autobiographical mention of the famine, see, M. Alekseev, “Seiatel i khranitel,” *Nash sovremennik*, no. 9 (1972): 96.
28. M. Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (New York 1958), 267, 444.
29. *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, 2 vols. (Toronto-Detroit 1955–7), 1: 230. A larger selection of the Chornukhyi documents were published as P.S. Lykho, “Soviet Rule at Close Quarters,” *Ukrainian Review* (Munich), no. 6 (1958): 126–69.
30. The Krynychansk documents are published in O. Kalynyk, *Communism: The Enemy of Mankind* (London 1955). The original documents, owned by the Shevchenko Scientific Society, have been microfilmed and a copy of the microfilm is on deposit at Columbia University.
31. A Parisian group called ‘Club des amis de l’Ukraine’ has republished French newspaper and journal articles about the famine in a collection: *1933–1983, 50ième anniversaire de la famine-génocide en Ukraine* (Paris 1983). This collection is available from the S. Petliura library in Paris.
32. W. H. Chamberlin, *Russia’s Iron Age* (Boston 1934). M. Muggeridge, *Winter in Moscow* (Boston 1934). M. Muggeridge, *Chronicles of Wasted Time: Volume One: The Green Stick* (New York 1973), 204–76.
33. *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 May–18 June 1934.
34. *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 May 1934.
35. *Manchester Guardian*, 27 March 1933.
36. Public Record Office, London, FO 371/17253, XC/A 026628.
37. See A. Pidhainy, “A Bibliography of the Great Famine in Ukraine, 1932–33,” *The New Review: A Journal of East European History*, no. 4 (1973); 32–68.
38. *New York Evening Journal*, 18–27 February 1935 (total of five articles). L. Fischer, “Hearst’s Russian ‘Famine’,” *The Nation*, CXL: 3636 (13 March 1935): 296–7, attacked the authenticity of the famine, after which Hearst published (or reprinted) in the *Journal* the accounts of Harry Lang (15–23 April 1935), R.H. and Margaret Sanger (29 April–9 May), Andrew Smith (29 May–7 June), and Adam Tawdul (18–31 August).
39. E. Ammende, *Human Life in Russia* (reprint) (Cleveland 1984).
40. A. Hencke, *Errinerungen als Deutschen Konsul in Kiew in den Jahren 1933–1936* (Munich 1979), 19.

41. A. Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commissar and Other Essays* (New York 1945), 137–8. *Idem.*, in R. Crossman, ed., *The God That Failed* (New York 1965), 52–3.
42. C. Wells, *Kapoot: The Narrative of a Journey From Leningrad to Mount Arrat in Search of Noah's Ark* (New York 1933), 121, 124, 127.
43. N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston 1970), 73–4.
44. L. Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer* (New York 1980), 224–86.
45. V. Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (New York 1946), 91–131.
46. V. Kravchenko, *I Chose Justice* (New York 1950), 61–108.
47. *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*.
48. M. Vervytsky, ed., *Naibilshyi zlochyn Kremlia. Zaplianovanyi shtuchnyi holod v Ukraini 1932–1933 rr.* (London 1951).
49. O. Woropay, *The Ninth Circle: In Commemoration of the Victims of the Famine of 1933* (Cambridge, Ma. 1983).
50. Iu. Semenko, ed., *1933 rik na Ukraini* (Munich 1963).
51. The files of the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project are housed at Harvard University.
52. Among the most important are: H. Siryk, *Fakty i podii dlia maibutnoi istorii Sivershchyny* (Toronto 1975); H. Siryk, *Pid sontsem obesdolenykh. (Trahediia moiei rodyny)* (Toronto 1982–3); P. Makohon, *Witness/Svidok* (Toronto 1983); F. Pravoberezhny, *8,000,000: 1933 rik na Ukraini* (Winnipeg 1951); M. Dolot, *Execution by Hunger* (New York 1985).
53. Marco Carynnyk recorded interviews of famine survivors. The Ukrainian Professionals and Businessmen's Association of New Jersey has also sponsored a pilot project, in the course of which 57 survivors were taped. The United States Congress, late in 1984, appropriated \$400,000 for a commission to study the famine, and it is to be hoped that the bulk of the appropriation will go for oral history. As yet no organization, private or governmental, has committed sufficient resources to make possible an attempt to reach the thousand or so famine survivors still among us in North America.



# MAKING THE NEWS FIT TO PRINT: WALTER DURANTY, THE *NEW YORK TIMES* AND THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE OF 1933

*Marco Carynnyk*

Irish by descent, English by place of birth and education, and a dabbler in necromancy by persuasion, Walter Duranty worked for the *New York Times* from 1913 to 1934, and then continued with the paper on a retainer basis until 1945. One of the best-known journalists in the world in his time, he was certainly the most famous correspondent to be stationed in Moscow. The books that he wrote about the Soviet Union sold enormous numbers of copies—the revealingly titled *I Write As I Please* became a best-seller—and influenced both public attitudes and government policies. In April 1932, Duranty was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his “dispassionate, interpretative reporting of the news from Russia.” His dispatches, the announcement said, were “marked by scholarship, profundity, impartiality, sound judgment, and exceptional clarity” and were “excellent examples of the best type of foreign correspondence.”<sup>1</sup> An Englishman who spent a decade in the foreign colony in Moscow spoke for many admirers when he dedicated a book to Duranty, “the doyen of Moscow correspondents at whose feet we all sit in matters Sovietic.”<sup>2</sup>

Not everyone agreed with the Pulitzer jury. Indeed, controversy surrounded Duranty within a year after he arrived in Moscow, and continues to this day. Eugene Lyons, then the United Press correspondent in Moscow, accused Duranty of “amazing sophistry.” Malcolm Muggeridge, who was reporting for the *Manchester Guardian* at the time,

thought that Duranty was “the greatest liar of any journalist that I have met in fifty years of journalism.” The American ex-Communist Jay Lovestone maintains that Duranty worked for the Soviet secret police. Joseph Alsop insists that “Duranty was a great KGB agent and lying like a trooper.” And the Russian émigré Lev Navrozov says that Duranty’s articles and books should be retitled as “A Drunken Sailor’s Yarns About a Foreign Country.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet none of Duranty’s critics have furnished proof that he deliberately misrepresented the facts about the Soviet Union. Now such evidence is at hand. It has to do with Duranty’s reports about the nature and extent of the famine in Ukraine. And it raises disturbing questions about the reliability of even the most distinguished newspapers.

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Although many foreign observers had begun to report signs of actual or impending famine as early as the spring of 1932, Duranty made no mention of them in his dispatches to the *New York Times* until late in the year. On 31 October 1932, he visited William Strang, the counselor of the British Embassy in Moscow, to share his new-found concern. Duranty “has at last awakened to the agricultural situation,” Strang reported to London.

He has been talking to Maurice Hindus and others who have been traveling about the country, and he says that the true position is only just being realized. His description of conditions was not very different from what we have ourselves been reporting for the last six to nine months. . . .

It is a bitter experience for country workers to find their good produce despatched they know not where, and to be left with not even enough to feed themselves and to receive only a meagre supply of manufactured and consumption goods in return. Large areas are almost depopulated and are going out of cultivation or are at the best undercultivated and choked with weeds. In addition to all this, the deportation of the kulaks has swept the countryside of the most enterprising, skilled and industrious part of its population. . . .

The collection of grain for centralized distribution (towns, consuming areas, army, export, reserves) is going badly. The total planned quota for this year is much lower than it was last year, as a result of the new policy of collective farm trade, but even this reduced plan has, to date, only been fulfilled to an extent much less than at the same date last year. The food situation is bad enough even now, when fruit and vegetables are still to be had, but what of the late winter and early spring? Until the middle of January, when the peasants (if they have delivered their quota to the State) will be free to throw their grain on the open market, the authorities



must rely on the dwindling grain collection to feed the town and consuming areas. After that, will the peasants have any grain to spare for the market, and if so, will they market it? If not, how are the towns to live?

What, [Duranty] asks himself, are the authorities to do? There are several possible issues.

There might be a return to Nep, modified to suit the conditions of 1932. This has been strongly urged upon them within the party itself. They considered it, hesitated, and rejected it, as the Central Committee resolutions and the recent expulsions from the party show.

Then, again, grain may be obtained by importation, or by the use of the army reserve established against the possibility of the war with Japan. To buy grain from abroad will mean less money for industrial equipment, but a reduction of purchases abroad has already been decided upon and there are already stories that the coming year is to be a "year of conservation," a breathing space between the first and second Five-Year Plan. As to the use of the army reserve, Mr. Duranty thinks that the present rapprochement with Japan may have this in view. The Russians want to be on good terms with Japan so that they can be free to call on their grain reserve and bring the troops back from the Far East. The Japanese want to be on good terms with Russia in order to prevent the latter from striking an anti-Japanese bargain with the United States in return for recognition.

It might be argued, [Duranty] agreed, that the quantities available from the army reserve, or even from importation, would be a mere drop in the bucket of the people's needs. But the point is, he says, that the drop would not be thrown into the bucket, but would be directed to the danger points. There are millions of people in Russia, peasants, whom it is fairly safe to leave in want. But the industrial proletariat, about 10 per cent of the population, must at all costs be fed if the revolution is to be safeguarded. This does not present an insuperable problem of distribution, if the extra grain can be got, for it would be all under the hand of the Government.

But failing either of these two measures, what then? Is there any other issue but a break? Is there no limit to the people's endurance? And yet there is, he thinks, no sign of any actively subversive or insurrectionary movement. Nor can he conceive, in terms of practical politics, by what process any such revolt or insurrection could arise or have any chance of success, unless it were to come not from among the people, but in the form of a "palace revolution" within the party itself. Yet, the discipline of the party is still strong and its agents very wide awake, with eyes on even the great ones themselves.

There is, of course, a still further alternative solution of the whole complex of Soviet difficulties, which he did not mention but which he naturally has in his mind, namely, recognition and a loan from America in re-

turn for a stronger anti-Japanese policy, heavy orders in the United States, and the handing over to United States interests for reconditioning or exploitation on a technical aid basis of part of the railway system, of the gold-producing industry, or even some of the Soviet giant industrial enterprises.<sup>4</sup>

Duranty expressed these concerns in a lengthy report, which the *New York Times* published as a six-part series on the “serious food shortage in Soviet Russia.” In these articles, he manipulated the official palaver so skilfully that it was possible to interpret them in several ways. The headline on one article (supplied by the editors of the *New York Times*) was “Food Shortage Laid to Soviet Peasants,” and indeed it was possible to read the article that way, but a closer reading shows that Duranty was hinting at government responsibility as well:

The food shortage must be regarded as a result of peasant resistance to rural socialization, or, perhaps, more accurately, as a result of the measures taken to overcome that resistance. The measures have proved effective and the resistance has been overcome—the operation was successful but it left the patient low.

Further in the same article Duranty pointed a finger at an important cause of the famine. Pushing through its plans, the Kremlin thought that the gains would outweigh the losses and reckoned that there would be some shortage for two or three years, although not so bad as to matter seriously. But two “extraneous factors” upset their calculations:

First, the fall of world prices, owing to the depression, which forced the Soviet Union to increase the exportation of foodstuffs at a time when the shoe was beginning to pinch and when the distribution of that food at home would have corrected many difficulties. Second, the Japanese war threat, which put new pressure on the same tender. The balance . . . could not be maintained, and the food supply became involved in a vicious circle, each difficulty breeding others.<sup>5</sup>

The *New York Times* found Duranty’s report important enough to make it the subject of editorials on two consecutive days. Although they praised Duranty for reporting the food shortage with “unprecedented detail and vigor,” the editors interpreted the causes of that shortage differently and were more blunt in referring to the “menace of famine” where Duranty had spoken only of a food shortage. “The present food situation,” they wrote, “is mainly the direct result of the Five-Year Plan and of the methods employed in putting it through. . . .

The 'successful' collectivization campaign is of course a ghastly failure. It has brought Russia to the edge of famine.'"6

This harsh criticism invoked the immediate wrath of the Soviet authorities. Strang described the lowering of the axe in a confidential letter to the Foreign Office in December 1932:

I learn from Cairns that the Soviet Ambassador... recently had Sir Walter Layton and Jules Menken on the mat for some articles in the *Economist* on the Soviet Union written by the latter after his visit here last summer, on the ground that they were not up to the *Economist's* usual "objective" standard and painted too black a picture.

I see also from the *Izvestiya* that the Soviet Embassy recently had to reproach another of its friends, this time the *Manchester Guardian*, for an unfriendly reference to Bessarabia.

But the crowning example is Walter Duranty. Duranty has been waking up to the truth for some time... but he has not hitherto let the great American public into the secret. A few days ago, however, he sent an article out by safe hand to Paris and had it telegraphed to New York, describing the position pretty much as he put it to me.... The *New York Times* made a great feature of it. Shortly afterwards Duranty was visited by emissaries from governing circles here (not from the Censorship Department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, but from higher spheres) who reproached him with unfaithfulness. How could he, who had been so fair for ten years, choose this moment to stab them in the back, when critical negotiations were taking place and when the prospect of recognition by the U.S.A. was brightening? What did he mean by it, and did he not realize that the consequences for himself might be serious[?]. Let him take this warning.

Duranty, who was to have left for a short visit to Paris that day, put off his departure to await further developments. Nothing happened, and he has now gone. He affects to think it possible that, like Paul S[c]heffer, [a German correspondent who was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929], he may not be allowed to return. I am sure he knows that any such fate is almost out of the question, but he says the authorities here are in such a state of nerves that there is no knowing what they may do.

He told me the above in confidence.<sup>7</sup>

The threat succeeded: for the remainder of his tour of duty in Moscow—and for some years after—Duranty collaborated with the Soviet government, not only suppressing the information about the famine that he himself obtained, but also ridiculing those foreign observers who had circumvented the Soviet censors and brought out reports about it.

Until early 1933, when the full force of the famine struck Ukraine

and the adjacent North Caucasus (much of which had been settled by Ukrainians), foreign correspondents were able to travel there as they chose. In an interview, Malcolm Muggeridge explained that when he decided to investigate the famine everyone in Moscow was talking about, he simply bought a train ticket and without informing the authorities set off for Kiev and Rostov. His blunt account—which he got past the censor by sending it out in a diplomatic bag, only to have it “mutilated,” as he told me, by his editors—appeared in the *Guardian* in March 1933:

The population is starving. “Hunger” was the word I heard most. Peasants begged a lift on the train from one station to another, sometimes their bodies swollen up—a disagreeable sight—from lack of food. . . . The little towns and villages seemed just numb and the people in too desperate a condition even actively to resent what had happened. . . . Cattle and horses dead; fields neglected; meagre harvest despite moderately good climatic conditions; all the grain that was produced taken by the Government; now no bread at all, no bread anywhere, nothing much else either; despair and bewilderment.<sup>8</sup>

Muggeridge’s articles produced no response beyond the predictable attacks by Soviet sympathizers (an argument about whether a famine had occurred heated the correspondence columns of the *Guardian* for several months). Moscow nonetheless began to discourage journalists from visiting Ukraine. Sir Esmond Ovey, the British ambassador to the USSR, reported the restriction to London on 5 March 1933:

Internal situation is not promising. Conditions in Kuban [in the North Caucasus] have been described to me by recent English visitor as appalling and as resembling an armed camp in a desert—no work, no grain, no cattle, no draught horses, only idle peasants or soldiers. Another correspondent who had visited Kuban was strongly dissuaded from visiting the Ukraine where conditions are apparently as bad although apathy is greater. In fact all correspondents have now been “advised” by the press department of Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to remain in Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

Although the travel ban remained in effect all spring and summer, Western newspapers accepted it without protest and their correspondents in Moscow did not report the restriction on their journalistic freedom for over six months. Only on 21 August 1933 did William Henry Chamberlin announce in the *Guardian* that he and his colleagues had been ordered not to leave the capital without submitting a detailed

itinerary and obtaining authorization from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

Your correspondent received personal evidence that this rule is no empty formality when he was refused permission today to visit country districts in Ukrainia and North Caucasus regions, which he visited several times in previous years without objection from the central or local authorities. This is not an isolated case of restriction, as your correspondent knows of an instance that occurred some time ago when two American correspondents were forbidden to visit Ukrainia . . . and several correspondents of various nationalities were warned not to leave Moscow without special permission.<sup>10</sup>

The London *Times* correspondent in Riga verified Chamberlin's account. "One of the chief purposes of this [ban]," he wrote on 21 August 1933, "is to screen the real conditions in the countryside from foreign eyes. . . . [Journalists] can still undertake journeys, but only after obtaining a special permit for an approved route, and they are always escorted by Communist officials. Permits for some of the chief grain areas are now very difficult or impossible to obtain."<sup>11</sup>

The Associated Press also confirmed Chamberlin's report. Although the Commissariat for Foreign affairs was claiming a bumper crop, it had refused permission to Chamberlin to observe the harvest in Ukraine and the North Caucasus: "Mr. Chamberlin, one of the best known American correspondents, who has lived here eleven years, has often traveled in those regions. There was a food shortage there the past Winter. Several months ago two other American correspondents were forbidden to make a trip to the Ukraine."<sup>12</sup>

And Frederick Birchall, the *New York Times* reporter in Berlin, related on 24 August that a correspondent for his paper in another capital who had applied for a tourist visa to the Soviet Union was turned down on the grounds that journalists were forbidden to travel as tourists, while an American correspondent stationed in Moscow who had asked for a visa to return there via Odessa was told it would be granted to him only if he pledged himself not to leave the train en route.<sup>13</sup>

Even the *Manchester Guardian*, usually regarded by the Soviet government as one of its staunchest supporters, observed editorially that although the grain harvest was "exceptionally good," foreign correspondents who wanted to look at it in Ukraine and the North Caucasus were being refused permission. "Whence this modesty? Since the achievements of the State and collective farms have been so great, why should they be refused their due publicity in the foreign press? . . . If



now the Soviet Government refuses permission to responsible foreign correspondents who wish to visit the grain areas and report on the harvesting it must not be surprised if foreign opinion draws unfavourable inferences."<sup>14</sup>

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The Soviet government responded swiftly to the criticism. In September 1933, as the new harvest was brought in, compulsory grain deliveries to the state were reduced, and the famine began to taper off because the farmers were finally allowed to keep some of their crops, Moscow lifted the travel restrictions.<sup>15</sup> Edward Coote, a member of the staff of the British chancery in Moscow, commented on the lifting of the ban in a dispatch to Whitehall on 12 September:

The foreign press has, I hear, reported that the ban on journeys in the interior by foreign journalists has been lifted, but this is not the whole truth. Mr. Duranty, the *New York Times* correspondent, whom the Soviet Union are probably more anxious to conciliate than any other, returned from abroad in August having heard that journeys in the interior by foreign correspondents had been prohibited, and thereupon addressed a letter to M. Litvinov protesting against this prohibition and stating that he intended to tour in the grain districts of the Ukraine on a certain date in September, accompanied by a colleague. In due course he received orally from the Press Department an assurance that he might travel on a fixed date later in the month. Mr. Duranty professed to be much irritated by this action, which he felt had cut the ground from under his feet by obliging him to recognize a ban upon his movements which infringed the liberty of the press. Nevertheless, he and his colleague have set out happily enough, and I have no doubt that, as a totally unqualified agricultural observer, he will have no difficulty in obtaining sufficient quantitative experience in four hours to enable him to say whatever he may wish to say on his return.<sup>16</sup>

Duranty had in fact determined what he wished to say about the "famine scare," as he repeatedly called it, long before this trip to Ukraine. In March 1932, when Eugene Lyons reported an early sign of famine to New York, Duranty apprised the *New York Times* that there was no famine anywhere, although "partial crop failures" had occurred in some regions.<sup>17</sup>

By November, the year's harvest had been brought in and Communist activists were roaming the countryside, stripping the farmers of their grain. Duranty admitted that there was a shortage of food, but insisted that "there is no famine or actual starvation, nor is there likely to



be.”<sup>18</sup> And the food shortages that did exist, he argued, were the fault of the peasants, who had fled from the villages to the towns and construction sites, leaving the harvest unreaped and the grain rotting in the fields. But it would be a mistake, concluded Duranty, to exaggerate the gravity of the situation. Socialism had won a victory comparable to the one in the civil war, he argued. The cost had been great and the strain prodigious; but in every field of endeavour the Soviet Union was now vastly superior, and even the food shortage was insignificant as compared with conditions in 1920. Despite hardship and discouragement, shortage and grumbling, the Soviet leaders still had the backing of the masses. Unless an international disturbance complicated matters, remedies would doubtless be found.<sup>19</sup>

Then in April 1933, when the famine was raging in full force because repeated grain collections had stripped the countryside bare (although they claimed to be fulfilling the state grain quotas, the collectors often confiscated baked bread, emptied pots of porridge and removed kitchen utensils, clothes and furniture), Duranty rebutted a report brought out by Gareth Jones. A young Welshman who had studied history under Sir Bernard Pares, the eminent historian of Russia, and served as an aide to Lloyd George, Jones investigated the famine by the simple expedient of packing a knapsack with as much tinned food as he could carry, travelling by train from Moscow to Kharkiv and then setting out on foot to explore the villages in the Kharkiv region. On his return from the Soviet Union, Jones announced his ghastly findings at a press conference in Berlin and a lecture at Chatham House in London. Like Muggeridge before him, Jones found severe famine. Everywhere he went he heard the cry, “There is no bread, we are dying.” Millions of lives were being menaced:

The villages which I visited alone on foot were by no means in the hardest-hit parts, but in almost every village the bread supply had run out two months earlier, the potatoes were almost exhausted, and there was not enough coarse beet, which was formerly used as cattle fodder but has now become a staple food of the population, to last until the next harvest. . . . In each village I received the same information—namely, that many were dying of famine and that about four-fifths of the cattle and the horses had perished. . . . Nor shall I forget the swollen stomachs of the children in the cottages in which I slept.<sup>20</sup>

Duranty quickly dismissed Jones’ “big scare story.” Yet he scoffed so cleverly that he both denied and confirmed Jones’ eyewitness account. On the one hand, Duranty implied that Jones’ story had been inspired by British sources in retaliation for the Soviet arrest of six Englishmen

who had been employed by the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company on construction projects in the USSR. On the other, Duranty agreed when Jones said that “there was virtually no bread in the villages he had visited and that the adults were haggard, gaunt and discouraged.”

Several paragraphs later Duranty set about justifying the famine:

But—to put it brutally—you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs, and the Bolshevik leaders are just as indifferent to the casualties that may be involved in their drive toward socialization as any General during the World War who ordered a costly attack to show his superiors that he and his division possessed the proper soldierly spirit. In fact, the Bolsheviks are more indifferent because they are animated by fanatical convictions.

Having admitted that the regime was waging a war against the Ukrainian peasants, Duranty proceeded to explain away the casualties. Jones, he said, had based his report on a tour of the villages. Duranty, however, had more reliable information: he had inquired in Soviet commissariats and foreign embassies and had tabulated the impressions of both Russian and foreign friends. And here were the facts:

There is a serious food shortage throughout the country, with occasional cases of well-managed State or collective farms. The big cities and the army are adequately supplied with food. There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation, but there is wide-spread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition. . . . In short, conditions are definitely bad in certain sections—Ukraine, North Caucasus and Lower Volga. The rest of the country is on short rations but nothing worse. These conditions are bad, but there is no famine.<sup>21</sup>

Duranty, to be sure, did not act alone in throwing down Jones. The home offices of the American correspondents had all cabled urgent queries after Jones announced his findings. But preparations were under way for the Metropolitan-Vickers trial, and gaining access to the courtroom was more important for the Americans than reporting the famine. As Eugene Lyons put it, “the need to remain on friendly terms with the censors at least for the duration of the trial was for all of us a compelling professional necessity.”

Meeting the correspondents in one of their hotel rooms, Konstantin Umansky, the head of the Press Department of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, worked out with them a formula for denying Jones’ account. Before the evening was over vodka and snacks had been or-

dered. The "celebration"—the word is Lyons'—lasted until early morning. By the time the trial had ended (all the Britons were released) the American correspondents had forgotten that they no longer needed to remain on "friendly terms" with the censors and did not bother to retract their attack against Jones. "Throwing down Jones," Lyons lamented, "was as unpleasant a chore as fell to any of us in years of juggling facts to please dictatorial regimes. But throw him down we did, unanimously and in almost identical formulas of equivocation. Poor Gareth Jones must have been the most surprised human being alive when the facts he so painstakingly garnered from our mouths were snowed under by our denials."<sup>22</sup>

In early April 1933, Duranty again bruited prosperity and abundance. "In the excitement over the Spring sowing campaign and the reports of an increased food shortage," he announced, "a fact that has been almost overlooked is that the production of coal, pig iron, steel, oil, automobiles, tractors, locomotives and machine tools has increased by 20 to 35 per cent during recent months. That is the most effective proof that the food shortage as a whole is less grave than was believed."<sup>23</sup>

The issue that carried this sophism<sup>24</sup> also brought a plea for help from a Katherine Schutock in Jackson Heights, New York, who pointed out that Duranty's denial of starvation was contradicted by letters from Ukraine, the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga region. "The people who write such pathetic letters," noted Schutock,

are not looking for help because it cannot reach them. Money cannot reach them, and if it does they receive only half of what they sign for. Receipt of help from America only gets them into trouble with the Cheka. Most of the letters I have seen end thus: "If you do not hear from us again, you can be sure we are not alive. We are either getting it for [writing] this letter, or we are through. The agony of living and dying of hunger is so painful and so long. What torture it is to live in hunger and know you are dying slowly of hunger."<sup>25</sup>

At the height of the famine, a demographer has estimated, Ukrainian peasants were dying at the rate of 25,000 a day, or 1,000 an hour, or 17 a minute. (In the First World War, by comparison, about 6,000 people were killed every day.)<sup>26</sup> Country lanes and city streets were littered with corpses—"stacked in the snow like logs," one eyewitness told me—and special brigades hastily dug mass graves in remote areas where they doused the bodies with petrol and set them on fire. Ukraine that spring was one vast hell. The *New York Times*, however, made absolutely no reference to the situation for more than a month, when it published Jones' reply to Duranty's denial of famine.

Standing by his claim that a severe famine was in progress, Jones pointed out that he had spoken with foreign journalists and technical experts, hundreds of peasants and between twenty and thirty diplomats, all of whom had agreed that starvation was widespread:

But [the diplomats] are not allowed to express their views in the press, and therefore remain silent. Journalists, on the other hand, are allowed to write, but the censorship has turned them into masters of euphemisms and understatement. Hence they give "famine" the polite name of "food shortage" and "starving to death" is softened down to read as "widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition."<sup>27</sup>

Duranty, undaunted, continued to slur the reports of starvation that were appearing in the Western press. Visiting Odessa, he asserted that the food situation was "undoubtedly better" than had been reported: in a town near Kiev peasant women were offering roast chicken; in Odessa the bread ration had been increased, and peasants were marketing eggs and vegetables:

It is an old story, which the writer first heard on the Volga during the famine in the Summer of 1921. Everywhere they said, "Things here are desperate, and unless we get relief we will die before Christmas"—which was true enough. Then we asked them, "But are people dying here now?" And they replied, "No, not here yet, but if you go to the village of So-and-So you will find hardly any one alive." We went to said village and heard exactly the same story. "Here we are desperate, though not yet dying, but at So-and-So conditions are frightful. . . ." Though conditions are terribly hard, there is no sign of real famine conditions or that people are dying in the streets, as is reported in Moscow.<sup>28</sup>

In June, when he was forced to defend himself against a charge of receiving concessions from the Soviet government, Duranty took the opportunity to deny an account in the London newspapers that the victims of the famine were fleeing to Moscow in search of food and dying in the streets. Seeing in the reports of famine "a campaign of calumny that has scarcely been equalled since Nero raised Rome against the Christians—or Hitler Germany against the Jews," Duranty called the talk about corpses in the streets of Moscow "utterly untrue."<sup>29</sup> Yet the diplomats whom he cited as a source for his claim that there were no deaths from starvation confirmed the exact opposite. "Even in Moscow itself, which is favoured above all places in the Union in the matter of food, there are deaths from starvation," William Strang, the counsellor of the British embassy, reported on 17 July. "An English

lady, who is studying Soviet hospitality and welfare work, has herself come upon two corpses in the street of persons who had just died as a direct result of lack of food.”<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, when a newspaper in Riga reported in August that the starvation and suffering were comparable to the famine of 1921, Duranty denounced the assertion as a “fundamental absurdity.” He also managed to slip into this story the standard Soviet insinuation that the famine reports were inspired by Nazi Germany: “The accession of Adolf Hitler to power brought new hope—and in some cases new money—to Russian émigré circles in Germany, the Baltic States and elsewhere. These émigrés—like some other more disinterested observers of Soviet affairs—cannot see the woods for the trees and are only too ready to confuse causes and effects.”<sup>31</sup>

Yet even as he ridiculed the increasingly frequent eyewitness accounts of a devastating famine, Duranty half-heartedly admitted that the “food shortage” had taken a toll and, salting his articles with such cautious euphemisms as deaths due to “lowered resistance” and “malnutrition,” ventured to estimate the losses:

The excellent harvest about to be gathered shows that any report of a famine in Russia is today an exaggeration or malignant propaganda. The food shortage which has affected almost the whole population in the last year, and particularly the grain-producing provinces—that is, the Ukraine, North Caucasus, the Lower Volga Region—has, however, caused heavy loss of life. . . . The death rate rose during the Winter and early Spring to nearly four times the normal rate, which runs about 20 to 25 per 1,000 annually for the Soviet Union. Among peasants and others not receiving bread rations conditions were certainly not better. So with a total population in the Ukraine, North Caucasus and Lower Volga of upward of 40,000,000 the normal death rate would have been about 1,000,000. Lacking official figures, it is conservative to suppose that this was at least trebled last year in those provinces and considerably increased for the Soviet Union as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

The careful reader (and how many of Duranty’s readers cared to untangle these sentences?) will note that he avoided giving an absolute figure of famine losses. But since he announced that the normal death rate would have been about one million and that this was trebled, we must assume that he was hinting at two million famine victims.

In September 1933, when he received the privilege of being the first correspondent to be allowed into the famine regions after the travel ban was lifted, Duranty set out by car for Rostov in the North Caucasus and Kharkiv and Kiev in Ukraine. His public view of the “famine



scare,” which he presented in seven articles in the *New York Times* between 11 and 20 September 1933, was not changed by what he saw.

“Whatever the situation was here last Winter or Spring,” Duranty cabled on 11 September, “there is no doubt Rostov-on-Don is a busy, flourishing city today. Local officials and newspaper men scout the stories of hunger epidemics and a much increased death rate earlier this year. They emphasize that half the city’s population now receives at least one meal daily in factory and other ‘mass restaurants.’”<sup>33</sup>

Two days later Duranty suggested that the North Caucasus was a land of milk and honey:

The use of the word “famine” in connection with the North Caucasus is a sheer absurdity. There a bumper crop is being harvested as fast as tractors, horses, oxen, men, women and children can work. . . . There are plump babies in the nurseries or gardens of the collectives. Older children are watching fat calves or driving cattle. . . . Village markets are flowing with eggs, fruit, poultry, vegetables, milk and butter at prices far lower than in Moscow. A child can see that this is not famine but abundance.

This makes it all the more inexplicable that the Moscow authorities have restricted freedom of travel for any foreign correspondent, even on the plaintive grounds that “some correspondents earlier wrote most distressing articles. . . .” For the writer’s part he believes the distressing facts were exaggerated. He thinks he himself exaggerated in saying the death rate in the North Caucasus, the Ukraine and Lower Volga regions in the past year was three times above normal—at least as far as the North Caucasus was concerned.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever his new estimate was (he again avoided citing absolute figures), Duranty maintained it for only two days. “Early last year, under the pressure of the war danger in the Far East,” he wrote from Kharkiv,

the authorities took too much grain from the Ukraine. Meanwhile, a large number of peasants thought they could change the Communist party’s collectivization policy by refusing to cooperate. Those two circumstances together—the flight of some peasants and the passive resistance of others—produced a very poor harvest last year, and even part of that was never reaped. The situation in the Winter was undoubtedly bad. Just as the writer considered that his death-rate figures for the North Caucasus were exaggerated, so he is inclined to believe that the estimate he made for the Ukraine was too low. [That estimate was three times the normal death rate].<sup>35</sup>



Let us examine this passage more closely. In the first sentence Duranty implied—quite correctly—that the authorities had caused the famine by stripping Ukraine of its grain. But they did so, he said, because they needed to stockpile food in case war with Japan broke out. Duranty presented this cause as if it were well known and needed no explanation. In fact, he was sending up a trial balloon. He had only hinted at fear of war with Japan as a cause of the famine in previous articles, and he mentioned it again only eleven years later, when he argued that the “man-made famine” (yes, he used that phrase, although he enclosed it in quotation marks), if anything like a famine had taken place at all, was entirely due to the Red Army’s need for food reserves.<sup>36</sup>

In the second sentence of the passage, however, Duranty adroitly shifted the blame for the famine onto the peasants, who had produced a very poor harvest by fleeing or putting up passive resistance. “Peasant hatred of new ways, peasant conservatism and peasant inertia,” as well as outright sabotage—those were the real causes of any food shortages, Duranty insisted again and again.<sup>37</sup>

As in his August dispatch, Duranty carefully avoided giving an absolute figure of famine losses. Earlier he had estimated that the normal annual death rate of one million in Ukraine, the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga, taken together, had trebled, thus implying that the famine had killed two million people. Now he announced that this figure was too high for the North Caucasus and too low for Ukraine. But since he did not give a population figure for Ukraine or estimate its losses, we cannot tell what figure he had in mind. The conclusion presented to the readers of the *New York Times*, however, was clear: if there was a famine (Duranty’s evidence on this point was highly ambiguous), it killed no more than two million people, and any such losses were entirely justified by the success of collectivization. A bit of suffering on the part of a few ignorant, anti-social kulaks had assured abundance for all.

In the remaining three articles in the series, Duranty resumed scoffing at the famine scare. “The writer has just completed a 200-mile auto trip through the heart of the Ukraine and can say positively that the harvest is splendid and all talk of famine now is ridiculous,” he assured his readers on 17 September 1933.<sup>38</sup>

“Summing up the impressions of a ten days’ trip through North Caucasus and Ukraine, where this correspondent traveled with greater freedom and absence of supervision than had been expected, I repeat the opinion that the decisive engagement in the struggle for rural socialization has been won by the Kremlin,” Duranty concluded on 19 September. “The cost in some places has been heavy, but a generally excellent

crop is already mitigating conditions to a marked extent.”<sup>39</sup>

Returning to Moscow, Duranty continued to gibe at the reports of famine. In mid-December the Soviet government announced that the state grain collections had been completed two and a half months earlier than ever before. “This result,” said Duranty,

fully justifies the optimism expressed to the writer by local authorities during his September trip through the Ukraine and North Caucasus—optimism that contrasted so strikingly with the famine stories then current in Berlin, Riga, Vienna and other places, where elements hostile to the Soviet Union were making an eleventh-hour attempt to avert American recognition by picturing the Soviet Union as a land of ruin and despair.<sup>40</sup>

Duranty’s denials proved useful to Soviet spokesmen. When a group of Ukrainian women in the United States appealed to Congressman Herman Kopplemann of Connecticut to intervene with Moscow, Kopplemann forwarded their brief to Maxim Litvinov, the people’s commissar for foreign affairs. “There is any amount of such pamphlets full of lies circulated by counter-revolutionary organizations abroad, who specialize in the work of this kind,” replied Litvinov, his grammar faulty, but his meaning clear. “There is nothing left for them to do but to spread false information or to forge documents.”

The Ukrainian memorandum had cited Duranty’s August estimate of a trebled death rate. Boris Skvirsky, the counsellor of the USSR Embassy in Washington, who was instructed by Litvinov to answer the Ukrainian charge in detail, found Duranty’s later retraction of his estimate a handy rebuttal:

The pamphlet does not add that in the *Times*, September 13, writing from Rostov-on-Don in the course of a personal inspection trip through those sections, Duranty stated that his estimate of July 24, before he had made his personal inspection, was exaggerated. He said that the poor harvest of 1932 had made for difficult conditions in certain sections, but there had been no famine.

Koppleman had second thoughts about the cause he had supported. Forwarding copies of Litvinov’s and Skvirsky’s replies to the Ukrainian women, he wrote: “Because the facts contained in the pamphlet you submitted to me conflict to a large extent with the report from the Soviet officials, I am asking you to make further investigation of the charges you have presented to me.”<sup>41</sup>

American liberals appreciated Duranty’s efforts to make the news fit to print. George Seldes, author of several books about journalistic in-

tegrity, claimed that America would have nothing but objective and reliable news if all the editors chose correspondents of Duranty's calibre.<sup>42</sup> The journalist Alvin Adey observed that "there is no American correspondent, or for that matter any other non-Russian writer on Soviet affairs, who surpasses Walter Duranty in knowledge and understanding of Russia."<sup>43</sup> And Alexander Woolcott of the *New Yorker* described the scene when the United States' recognition of the USSR was celebrated with a banquet at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York in late 1933 and the roster of those who had contributed most to the *rapprochement* was called:

For each name in the roll, whether Russian or American, there was polite applause from the seventeen hundred [guests], but the one really prolonged pandemonium was evoked by the mention of a little Englishman who was an amused and politely attentive witness of these festivities. Indeed, one quite got the impression that America, in a spasm of discernment, was recognizing both Russia and Walter Duranty.<sup>44</sup>

Another award for Duranty came from the *Nation*, which annually published an honour roll of citizens and institutions. In 1933 the honours went to the *New York Times* for printing and Walter Duranty for writing, during the previous decade and a half of Soviet rule, "the most enlightening, dispassionate, and readable dispatches from a great nation in the making which appeared in any newspaper in the world."<sup>45</sup>

Moscow was no less appreciative. Although in 1920 Duranty had called the Bolshevik system "one of the most damnable tyrannies in history . . . a compound of force, terror and espionage, utterly ruthless in conception and execution," he and Louis Fischer were feted at a banquet in September 1932 in appreciation of their "fairness and impartiality" in ten years of reporting.<sup>46</sup> And in November 1933 Duranty was hailed by Karl Radek as one of five men (the others being William Bullitt, Raymond Robbins, Senator William Borah and Louis Fischer) most responsible for bringing about recognition of the USSR by the United States.<sup>47</sup> Stalin bestowed the highest praise. "You have done a good job in your reporting of the U.S.S.R., although you are not a Marxist, because you tried to tell the truth about our country and to understand it and explain it to your readers," he flannelled Duranty nine days after the latter filed his story of hostile elements making an eleventh-hour attempt to avert U.S. recognition. "You bet on our horse to win when others thought it had no chance, and I am sure that you have not lost by it."<sup>48</sup>

Duranty quickly collected his bet. He triumphantly accompanied Litvinov to the United States in November 1933 when the latter came to

negotiate diplomatic relations and on his return took with him in his dispatch case, as Woollcott put it, the first American ambassador to Moscow.<sup>49</sup> And late in the year, Duranty was granted an hour-long interview with the Great Helmsman. It was featured on the front page by the *New York Times* and summarized in other papers.<sup>50</sup> "It is unusual for M. Stalin to give interviews to journalists," a Soviet specialist in the Foreign Office commented drily, "but W. Duranty might be expected to get favourable treatment in this respect."<sup>51</sup>

The enthusiasm was not quite as keen in England. Reviewing Duranty's story of his journalistic career, *I Write as I Please*, a reviewer for the London *Times* wrote that the book was of interest so far as Duranty described his experiences in the Soviet Union, but that as an objective guide it was often "vague to the point of flippancy. One cannot but discern an obvious indifference to the background of the great events he is reporting."<sup>52</sup> The British Foreign Office was harsher. "Duranty, an expatriate Englishman of only mediocre capability," a Foreign Office official wrote in August 1932, "is for some unexplained reason regarded with awe by the American public and by such a mixed bag of American public men as Senator Borah, Paul Robeson and Governor Roosevelt. He is a trimmer and probably not very honest and in his muddled way is genuinely pro-Soviet. He has done much good work for the Russians in his recent tour in the States. The *New Yorker* describes him as "our (i.e., American) most respected envoy in Europe" "with a faint air of skulduggery about him."<sup>53</sup> A second official was prompted to comment that Duranty had always been a "conscious humbug."<sup>54</sup> A third official observed that Duranty was "a somewhat shady individual, who has been accused (though not on convincing evidence, as far as I can tell) of being in the pay of the Soviet Govt." and that his views were "pro-Soviet."<sup>55</sup>

Malcolm Muggeridge made a similar point when he observed in an interview that Duranty's articles were "very valuable evidence on the side of recognition."

Some people believed that the authorities had a hold on him because he had been involved in some business with money that would have made difficulties for him. I don't know about that, but I do know that he wanted to stay in Moscow, and the way to stay there was to dish up the party line in terms that the [*New York*] *Times* would find acceptable. It paid off, because by constantly echoing the party line Duranty would get an interview with Stalin or various privileges that journalists treasure.<sup>56</sup>

Leonard Hubbard, an English economist who was visiting Moscow to study the Soviet banking system, described the circumstances of the in-

terview with Stalin in notes that were forwarded to the Foreign Office by its embassy in Moscow:

Sept. 1 [1934]. Yesterday evening dined at Hotel National with Carson, Walter Duranty and Gray. Duranty very amusing and interesting. Described his interview with Stalin on Christmas day, 1933. He had asked for an interview to get a message to the American people on the occasion of recognition. He was rung up at an evening party about 6 o'clock and told Stalin would see him at 7. More or less successfully recovering sobriety, he repaired to the Kremlin. Stalin did not want to give a definite message as Kalinin [the Soviet "President"] had already done that, but was inclined to talk on general subjects. The interview was not prepared but quite spontaneous. . . .

The harvest this year will be about 70 million tons, about the same as 1931. [Duranty] admitted that the enormous estimate last year was false because allowance was not made for losses. The exact net harvest he did not give. The death rate from starvation and disease during the past three years has been very heavy and he is sure the total population is less than it was three years ago. The incidence of disease, especially typhus, is a very good indication of general conditions, and this year disease is much less than last year. . . .

Duranty is rather persona grata at the Kremlin, which is another way of saying that he has been more favourable to Russia than most of the foreign correspondents. Possibly he originally tried to see the best side in order to facilitate his work and has gradually trained himself to make the best case automatically. . . . <sup>57</sup>

And Western correspondents who knew Duranty in Moscow called him Walter Obscuranty and said that the impressions he conveyed privately did not even remotely resemble the impressions he purveyed to his readers. Muggeridge, who drew a devastating sketch of Duranty in his novel *Winter in Moscow* (the identifying tag is Duranty's egg-and-omelette line), termed his collected reporting from the Soviet Union an "essay in untruth" and pointed out that the book had been "rather carefully selected" and that "like *Gulliver's Travels*, it is a fantasy which holds together once you accept the fact of Lilliputians—in this case, of a purposive Bolshevik mind which has inherited the Tzar's fatherhood, and pursues its exalted way towards a classless, socialist society." Muggeridge then closed in for the kill:

I shall never forget Mr. Duranty. "There was something fantastic, fairy-like about the spectacle of him dancing his Roger de Coverley hand in hand with the Bolshevik bosses on a prostrate Russia. How jauntily the



dance proceeded! What spirit in the steps and capers! And no confusion. No flagging. If, occasionally, a dancer withdrew, the figure did not suffer. Still a partner to bow to, still hands outstretched for a giddy twirl, still the dance going merrily on. . . . The remarkable thing is that Mr. Duranty has—to use one of his favourite expressions—“gotten away with it.” Readers of the *New York Times* adore him; the Brain Trust and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat have lain down together, and Mr. Duranty has led them; his name is honoured amongst the righteous in all parts of the world. In these circumstances, does not the dust-cover of *Russia Reported* show unusual moderation in describing the book as a “supreme triumph of modern reporting”?<sup>58</sup>

Eugene Lyons’ criticism was just as savage. The blockade on news from Ukraine and the North Caucasus that lasted through the spring and summer of 1933, he recollected, was lifted in “easy stages”:

The first to be given permission to travel in the forbidden zones were the technically “friendly” reporters, whose dispatches might be counted upon to take the sting out of anything subsequent travelers might report. Duranty, for instance, was given a two weeks’ advantage over most of us.

On the day he returned, it happened, Billy [Lyons’ wife] and I were dining with Ann O’Hare McCormick, roving correspondent for the *New York Times*, and her husband. Duranty joined us. He gave us his fresh impressions in brutally frank terms and they added up to a picture of ghastly horror. His estimate of the dead from famine was the most startling I had as yet heard from anyone.

“But, Walter, you don’t mean that literally?” Mrs. McCormick exclaimed.

“Hell I don’t. . . . I’m being conservative,” he replied, and as if by way of consolation he added his famous truism: “But they’re only Russians. . . .”

Once more the same evening we heard Duranty make the same estimate, in answer to a question by Laurence Stallings, at the railroad station, just as the train was pulling out for the Polish frontier. When the issues of the *Times* carrying Duranty’s own articles reached me I found that they failed to mention the large figures he had given freely and repeatedly to all of us.<sup>59</sup>

Yet the most damning evidence against Duranty has never been presented. In a memorandum that he wrote for Muggeridge in December 1937, Lyons revealed the figure he had heard from Duranty:



In *Assignment in Utopia*, I tell how Duranty, returning from a tour of inspection after the 1932–33 famine, told Anne O'Hare McCormick, myself and others that the famine had killed many millions. His estimate, I say, was the largest I had yet heard. In the book I didn't mentioned the figure he used, but it was 7,000,000! Having passed on that figure to us in private conversation, he went home and wrote his famous dispatches pooh-pooing the famine.<sup>60</sup>

Several days after his meeting with Lyons, Duranty gave the British chancery in Moscow an even more revealing account of his impressions in the North Caucasus and Ukraine. Strang summarized Duranty's findings for Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary, on 26 September 1933:

According to Mr. Duranty, the population of the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga has decreased in the past year by 3 million, and the population of the Ukraine by 4–5 million. . . . From Rostov Mr. Duranty went to Kharkov, and on the way he noticed that large quantities of grain were in evidence at the railway stations, of which a large proportion was lying in the open air. Conditions in Kharkov were worse than in Rostov. There was less to eat, and the people had evidently been on very short commons. . . . Supervision over visitors was also stricter in Kharkov. During the year the death rate in Kharkov was, he thought, not more than 10 per cent above the normal. Numerous peasants, however, who had come into the towns had died off like flies. . . . The Ukraine had been bled white. The population was exhausted. . . .

At Kharkov Mr. Duranty saw the Polish consul, who told him the following story: A Communist friend employed in the Control Commission was surprised at not getting reports from a certain locality. He went out to see for himself, and on arrival he found the village completely deserted. Most of the houses were standing empty, while others contained only corpses. . . .

Mr. Duranty thinks it quite possible that as many as ten million people may have died directly or indirectly from lack of food in the Soviet Union during the past year.<sup>61</sup>

Neither this figure nor the one he had cited to Lyons ever appeared in any of Duranty's articles or books.

This was not the end of the concealment.

According to the British Foreign Office, Duranty's companion on his trip to Ukraine and the North Caucasus was Stanley Richardson of the Associated Press.<sup>62</sup> On 22 September, Richardson cabled an astonishing dispatch.

Early in 1933, Moscow had thoroughly reorganized the Ukrainian party, purging and arresting many members, and established "political departments" at each state farm and machine-tractor station. Staffed with trusted urban workers and party members—at least a third of them brought in from outside Ukraine—these political departments were given unlimited authority over the peasants and extensive powers over local Communists, many of whom had proven themselves too faint-hearted to carry out the party's murderous policies. As the head of the political departments throughout Ukraine and as one of the highest party officials in the republic, Alexander Asatkin was well placed to have an accurate picture of the destruction wreaked by the famine.

In his dispatch, Richardson reported that Asatkin, whom he had formally interviewed in Kharkiv, had confirmed the famine and had even "estimated the percentage of deaths in his area last winter and spring from causes related to undernourishment." The censor in Moscow, however, had banned the transmission of Asatkin's figures on the grounds that they were not official.<sup>63</sup> Although the *New York Times* carried other Associated Press dispatches from Moscow a few days before and a few days after the 22 September cable, it never published the report of Richardson's interview with Asatkin. A highly placed Communist official had confirmed the famine, and the *Times* had ignored the news.

But even this was not the end of the concealment.

Harold Denny, who replaced Duranty as the *Times* correspondent in Moscow in April 1934, proved to be no more honest a reporter of the famine than his predecessor. On 23 July 1934, for example, Denny announced that "a Winter of hunger and perhaps of actual famine has been averted in the great grain region of the Ukraine." The fair crop that was being expected, he fancied, would be "a victory for collectivized agriculture which will induce many remaining individual peasants to enter the fold."<sup>64</sup>

Throughout 1933 and 1934 Ewald Ammende had been trying almost singlehandedly to draw public attention to the famine. A Baltic German, Ammende had worked briefly for the government of independent Estonia in 1919 and then moved to Western Europe, where he threw himself into relief work. In September 1933, when Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna established a famine relief committee (the members included the chief rabbi, the head of the Lutheran Church and the leaders of other denominations in Vienna), Ammende became its general secretary. In late June 1934, Ammende arrived in New York with a mission to obtain the support of churches and humanitarian organizations in the United States and Canada. In interviews and letters to editors Ammende announced that wide starvation was impending again and asked

whether Western grain surpluses could not be used to bring relief to the starving districts in the Soviet Union.<sup>65</sup>

In response to queries from his editors about Ammende's assertion, Denny visited Ukraine in July and again in October. Echoing the articles in which Duranty had attacked Jones, Denny claimed to have seen no signs of famine. "This correspondent is traveling through the principal grain regions to check reports published abroad that a new famine exists or impends," Denny cabled from Ukraine on 7 October 1934. "Thus far no famine has been found nor an indication of famine in the year to come, though many peasants must draw in their belts and eat food they do not like until the 1935 harvest."

Although peasants in southern Ukraine, by his own admission, told him that they were in "grave danger," Denny reported that he had feasted on "milk from contented collectivized cows and honey fresh from the hives of Bolshevik bees": "These delicacies were served at the end of a meal of tasty salad of tomatoes, pickles and onions, roast duck and fluffy potato souffle, much better prepared than in Moscow hotels, washed down with the Ukrainian national drink, slivnyanka, a liquor made from plums, tasting non-alcoholic though with a mule's kick in every swallow."<sup>66</sup>

Eight days later Denny again announced that he had found no evidence of famine. He had deliberately sought, he said, "the sections where the worst conditions had been reported in the outside world and the localities that peasants on trains had told him were the most seriously affected." Despite all this searching, however, he had found no famine. Nor had he discovered anywhere "even [the] fear of it."<sup>67</sup>

Such denials, like those of Duranty, were convenient for Soviet apologists. When William Randolph Hearst mounted a campaign against Roosevelt's Soviet policy in 1935 and ordered his editors to reprint eyewitness accounts of the famine that had appeared in 1933, the American Communist Party attacked Hearst by citing Denny's finding that there was no famine anywhere.<sup>68</sup>

"The hunt for famine in Russia," Denny concluded, borrowing a line from Duranty, "was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. It was always somewhere further on."<sup>69</sup>

Thus the damage was done. The famine was a "will-o'-the-wisp."<sup>70</sup> Nazi and anti-Nazi, right and left, Stalinist and anti-Stalinist, would argue for years to come whether anything like a famine had happened at all, while the less polemically minded shuddered with distaste and turned to more substantial issues.

The famine of 1933 was met in most quarters with an indifference bordering on cynicism and in some with a conspiracy of silence (this proverbial phrase was coined to describe the famine of 1933) that is noth-

ing short of criminal. In an age when “genocide” and “holocaust” have become a part of every journalist’s lexicon, the horrors of 1933 in Ukraine are still dismissed by some as recondite, are still being made fit to print. George Orwell had it right:

The fog of lies and misinformation that surrounds such subjects as the Ukraine famine, the Spanish civil war, Russian policy in Poland, and so forth, is not due entirely to conscious dishonesty, but any writer or journalist who is fully sympathetic to the USSR—sympathetic, that is, in the way the Russians themselves would want him to be—does have to acquiesce in deliberate falsification on important issues.<sup>71</sup>

## NOTES

1. “Musical Play Gets the Pulitzer Award; Mrs. Buck, Pershing, Duranty Honored,” *New York Times*, 3 May 1932.
2. A. Wicksteed, *Ten Years in Soviet Moscow* (London 1933).
3. E. Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York 1937), 572; interview with Malcolm Muggeridge, 26 May 1982; Lovestone is cited in J. Finder, *Red Carpet* (New York 1983), 67; Alsop is quoted in H. Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor: The New York Times and Its Times* (New York 1980), 460; L. Navrosov, “Creativity awash in a sea of trivia,” *Our Canada*, 15 February 1983.
4. Public Record Office, London, FO.371/16336 N 6494. I am grateful to the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and the Famine Research Fund Committee in Toronto for helping to obtain the unpublished British documents cited here.
5. “Food Shortage Laid to Soviet Peasants,” *New York Times*, 26 November 1932.
6. “Bolsheviki United on Socialist Goal,” *New York Times*, 30 November 1932.
7. FO.371/16323 N 7289.
8. “The Soviet and the Peasantry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 27 March 1933.
9. FO.371/17251 N 1433.
10. “Journalists in Russia,” *Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1933. See also Chamberlin’s *Russia’s Iron Age* (Boston 1934), 148–51.

The official explanation of the travel ban was that the presence of foreign correspondents would hinder the harvest. “What was even more amusing than this suggestion that a few itinerant correspondents might seriously affect the fate of harvesting operations over almost one sixth of the surface of the globe,” Chamberlin observed, “was that some foreigners were

naive enough to take it seriously.” *Russia’s Iron Age*, 149.

11. “Soviet Harvest Difficulties,” *Times*, 22 August 1933.
12. “Moscow Doubles the Price of Bread. No Explanation Is Given for Action, Taken Despite the Reports of Big Harvest. Reporters Are Curbed. Foreigners May Not Visit the Provinces without Permit—Famine Is Denied,” *New York Times*, 21 August 1933.
13. “Famine in Russia Held Equal of 1921,” *New York Times*, 25 August 1933.
14. “The Russian Harvest,” *Manchester Guardian*, 22 August 1933.
15. See, for example, the Associated Press report “Russian Grain Harvest Seen as Ending Starvation Threat,” which was filed from Rostov on 10 September and was published the next day in the *New York American* (and numerous other newspapers):

Evidences of a harvest sufficient to end danger of starvation in the great grain-producing regions of the Ukraine and North Caucasus were observed by the Associated Press correspondent who arrived today.

Traveling without official supervision from Moscow on the first trip permitted since the Foreign Office invoked rigid control of the movements of foreign newswriters, the correspondent saw no signs of want or hunger from the limited vantage points afforded by brief halts at a large number of stations.

Whatever may have been the suffering endured last Winter and Spring—and even the most conscientious government supporters admit conditions were “very bad”—there is good reason to believe this year’s bountiful crop will be more than enough to meet the needs of the country.

16. FO.371/17253 N 6878.
17. Quoted in Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor*, 464.
18. “All Russia Suffers Shortage of Food; Supplies Dwindling,” *New York Times*, 25 November 1932.
19. “Food Shortage Laid to Soviet Peasants,” *New York Times*, 26 November 1932.
20. G. Jones, “The Peasants in Russia” [letter to the editor], *Manchester Guardian*, 8 May 1933.

See also Reuter, “Famine in Russia. Englishman’s Story. What He Saw on a Walking Tour,” *Manchester Guardian*, 30 March 1933, and Jones’ articles in *New York American*: “‘Bread, We Are Starving!’ Is Cry Heard Throughout Russia, Finds Gareth Jones,” 4 June 1933, and “Soviet Collective Farm Move Caused Famine in Russia,” Says Gareth Jones,” 11 June 1933.

21. “Russians Hungry, But Not Starving,” *New York Times*, 31 March 1933.



22. Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, 575.
23. "Soviet Industry Shows Big Gains," *New York Times*, 6 April 1933.
24. A sophism because by referring to the "food shortage as a whole" and by not specifying a geographic location Duranty concealed the fact that the Ukrainian countryside was starving. Workers and civil servants in the cities were undernourished, but in order to maintain production the regime did give them ration cards entitling them to a bowl of soup and a few hundred grams of bread a day.
25. K. E. Schutock, "Hunger in the Ukraine" [letter to the editor], *New York Times*, 6 April 1933.
26. S. Sosnovy, "Pravda pro holod na Ukraini v 1932–1933 rokakh," *Ukrainski visti*, 5 February 1950; G. Elliot, *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead* (London 1972), 23.
27. "Mr. Jones Replies" [letter to the editor], *New York Times*, 13 May 1933.
28. "Soviet Peasants Are More Hopeful," *New York Times*, 14 May 1933.
29. "Foreign Press Free of Soviet Pressure," *New York Times*, 11 June 1933.
30. FO.371/17251 N 5514.
31. "Russian Emigrés Push Fight on Reds," *New York Times*, 12 August 1933.
32. "Famine Toll Heavy in Southern Russia," *New York Times*, 24 August 1933. When Duranty's articles for this period were collected in book form, even these timid estimates were deleted. See *Duranty Reports Russia* (New York 1934), 304–26.
33. "Bread Prices High in Southern Russia," *New York Times*, 12 September 1933.
34. "Abundance Found in North Caucasus," *New York Times*, 14 September 1933.
35. "Big Soviet Crop Follows Famine," *New York Times*, 16 September 1933.
36. W. Duranty, *USSR: The Story of Soviet Russia* (Philadelphia 1944), 188–99.
37. The argument came straight from the party arsenal, and fellow travellers spun endless variations on it. A hagiographer of Maxim Litvinov discussed Stalin's accomplishments in the following terms: "The collectivization of agriculture . . . has been a major and difficult achievement, made more difficult and consequently more cruel by the stubbornness of certain sections of the peasantry. Yet when in the end collectivization succeeded, it brought prosperity to the peasants . . . banished the ever-recurrent menace of famine . . . and has firmly established one of the essential economic bases of the Soviet state." A. U. Pope, *Maxim Litvinoff* (New York 1943), 266–7.

I quote this passage because the assumptions in it—that the peasants

- manifested a lemming-like suicidal instinct and that collectivization was economically justified—have been taken up unthinkingly by scholars and statesmen. Even Churchill (witness his oft-quoted conversation with Stalin about the stresses of collectivization; worse than any battle of the Second World War, Stalin said) accepted this thoroughly mendacious argument.
38. "Big Ukraine Crop Taxes Harvesters," *New York Times*, 18 September 1933. The headings are revealing: "Talk of Famine Now is Called Ridiculous After Auto Trip Through Heart of Region. People Well-Nourished. Obey Orders of the Kremlin, Realizing Benefits to Them—Children Are Enthusiastic."
  39. "Soviet Chiefs Ban Farm Work Lull," *New York Times*, 20 September 1933.
  40. "Free Trade in Food Allowed in Russia," *New York Times*, 17 December 1933.
  41. Litvinov to Kopplemann, 3 January 1934; Skvirsky to Kopplemann, 3 February 1934; Kopplemann to Anna Mereshchak, President of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, 9 February 1934 (all three letters are in the author's possession).
  42. *Current Biography 1943*, 186.
  43. *Ibid.*, 183.
  44. A. Woollcott, "A Personal Note on Walter Duranty," in W. Duranty, *Duranty Reports Russia* (New York 1934), v.
  45. G. Seldes, *Freedom of the Press* (New York 1936), 341.
  46. "Moscow Honors Writers." *New York Times*, 28 September 1932: 5.
  47. M. Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia* (London 1947), 1: 122n.
  48. Quoted by Duranty in *I Write as I Please* (New York 1935), 166–7.
  49. Woollcott, v.
  50. "Stalin Says Japan Is 'Grave Danger'; Hopes for Peace." *New York Times*, 28 December 1933.
  51. FO.371/17244 N 9179.
  52. *Current Biography 1943*, 185.
  53. FO.371/16336 N 4912. The opinion of Duranty held by the Foreign Office should not be accepted uncritically. Immediately above the phrase "expatriate Englishman" someone wrote in "? Canadian Jew." This remark in itself is not proof of an anti-Semitic bias, but it should be seen in the light of the fact that in reporting on Soviet officials both the British embassy in Moscow and the Foreign Office in London pointed out which of them were Jews, but did not find it necessary to identify Russians, Georgians or Ukrainians as such.
  54. FO.371/18330 N 5357.
  55. FO.371/16336 N 6494.
  56. Malcolm Muggeridge. Personal interview. 26 May 1982.
  57. FO.371/18330 N 5357.

58. Malcolm Muggeridge, "An Essay in Untruth." *The English Review* 59 (October 1934): 500–2. The image of Duranty dancing was all the more cruel because he had lost a leg in a train accident and wore a prothesis.
59. Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, 579–80.
60. Lyons, "Memo for Malcolm Muggeridge," 9 December 1937.
61. FO.371/17253 N 7182. The record of Strang's dispatch in the Foreign Office files bears several annotations. It is marked "For distribution to the King, the Cabinet and the Dominions"; it bears the stamp "Circulated to the Cabinet by direction of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs"; and it contains a note saying "Paragraph 13 is horrifying—particularly coming from Mr. Duranty." (Paragraph 13 is the one in which Duranty's estimate of ten million dead is reported.) But this leads us to another question: how much Whitehall knew about the famine, why it chose to refer to it publicly as an "alleged famine," and why it brushed off all requests for appeals to the Soviet government.
62. FO.371/17253 N 6878 and N 7182.
63. I have been able to find Richardson's dispatch in only three North American papers. The *Toronto Star* published it on 22 September under the headline "Famine Deaths Ended Is Claim of Soviet." The *Toronto Evening Telegram* ran it on the same day under a full-page headline: "Soviet Government Suppresses Officials' Reports of Famine. Ukraine and Caucasus Suffered Awful Hunger." The *New York American*, which on Hearst's instructions made much of the famine in 1935, published the dispatch on 23 September under the headline "Soviet Boasts Big Grain Crop" and emphasized Richardson's conclusion that the rich grain crop would preclude a recurrence of "food shortage that recently caused many deaths of humans and cattle." The *New York American* did, however, print a revealing paragraph that the other two papers omitted: "All official sources approached regarding the probable death toll in North Caucasus refused any information beyond saying 'conditions were bad.' Only the freshly-hewn crosses dotting village graveyards and deserted huts in most of the villages remain as scars of the recent difficulties."

Duranty also met Asatkin in Kharkiv. According to Duranty, Asatkin admitted that there had been a "considerable outward flow from the villages and towns" and "considerable mortality" of livestock, but although "there was certainly distress in some sections," the human death rate had not exceeded 10 per cent. (Did Asatkin mean 10 per cent of the population of Ukraine? That would have meant over three million dead!) Having disposed of the famine question in this fashion, Duranty proceeded to stress the accomplishments of Soviet agriculture: Ukraine had accepted collectivization once and for all; the peasants had understood that the Communists were trying to help them to improve their lives; and the countryside was being transformed by "the greatest revolution in the history of the world."

- "Ukraine Far Ahead in Grain Deliveries," *New York Times*, 19 September 1933.
64. "Ukraine Averts Winter of Famine," *New York Times*, 24 July 1934.
  65. See for example Ammende's letters to the editor "Famine in Soviet Union" and "Relief Needed in Russia," *New York Times*, 11 July and 4 August 1934, and his *Human Life in Russia* (London 1936. Reprint. Cleveland 1984).
  66. "Russian Peasants on Short Rations," *New York Times*, 8 October 1934.
  67. "Soviet Confronts No Mass Starving," *New York Times*, 16 October 1934.
  68. W. F. Dunne, *Why Hearst Lies About Communism: Three Open Letters to William Randolph Hearst* (New York 1935), 35.
  69. "No Famine Found in North Ukraine," *New York Times*, 17 October 1934.
  70. Duranty used the will-o'-the-wisp line in April 1933, but two years later forgot that he had claimed to have had the experience himself and attributed it to a *Pravda* correspondent who accompanied Soviet President Kalinin on a tour of the Volga region during the famine of 1921. The journalist expressed surprise that there was no evidence of famine in the towns and villages they visited, although in each they were told that in the next village people were dying like flies. "None of the appalling stories which have reached Moscow . . . have yet been substantiated by facts," concluded the journalist. Duranty, *I Write as I Please*, 124-5.
  71. "The Prevention of Literature," *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, (London 1968), 4: 62.





# THE RUSSIAN MENSHEVIKS AND THE FAMINE OF 1933\*

*André Liebich*

In the interwar period the exiled Russian Mensheviks were among the best informed Western observers of Soviet developments.<sup>1</sup> One may well ask therefore whether they provided an account or explanation of the Ukrainian famine of 1933. We will answer this question by reconstructing the analysis of the famine found in the Menshevik press of the period. It should be stated at the outset that the Menshevik account was more fragmentary than one might hope; for example, the Mensheviks did not clearly differentiate Ukraine from other regions even though they drew their most harrowing reports of the famine from Ukraine. The Menshevik account was also more original than one might expect: unlike many other commentators, they refused to see the famine as an incidental byproduct of collectivization; they assigned direct responsibility for the famine to the wilful decisions of the Soviet leadership even if they did not probe into the aims pursued by that leadership through this policy. Whatever its merits and limitations, at the very least, the Menshevik account adds a new perspective on the famine and

\*The author is preparing a monograph on the Mensheviks after 1921, particularly the party's activities in exile. This research has been generously supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada which assisted the purchase of documentary material used in the present paper.

new insight into the reasons for Western indifference to this great historical tragedy.

Before dealing specifically with the question of the famine, it may be helpful to summarize the general position of the Mensheviks in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>2</sup>

The centre of Menshevik activity was the Foreign Delegation of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDRP) created by Iu. Martov and R. Abramovitch in 1920 and headed, after Martov's death in 1923, by F. Dan. The Foreign Delegation functioned in Berlin until the spring of 1933 when Hitler's seizure of power forced the Mensheviks to move to Paris. It may be noted here in passing that the dramatic events in Germany and the accompanying disruption for the Mensheviks, coincided with the period of the famine and contributed to the relative neglect of the situation in Ukraine which seems so baffling when we read the Menshevik press of the period.

The main activity of the Mensheviks was publication of the bi-weekly *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*. The Mensheviks also published a host of books, brochures and bulletins both in Russian and in Western languages, but it was above all through *Vestnik* that the Mensheviks remained in touch with the USSR. *Vestnik* published reports on Soviet conditions gleaned from a network of correspondents within the USSR as well as from a scrutiny of Soviet sources and even from "leaks," often intentional, by leading Soviet officials. *Vestnik* was smuggled into the Soviet Union through a number of ingenious channels where it was read not only among Mensheviks but in the Kremlin as well. As the years passed *Vestnik's* role became more and more difficult. By 1924 organized Menshevik underground activity came to a virtual standstill and in 1931 the "Mensheviks' Trial" destroyed all vestiges of Menshevik influence. Obviously, this trial absorbed much of *Vestnik's* attention and caused disarray among Menshevik informants in the Soviet Union precisely at the time that the conditions for the famine were being created. This too accounts, in part, for the Menshevik failure to concentrate on the famine and to publicize its development.

This is not the place to dwell on the merits of the Mensheviks' general analysis of Soviet events or on their overall outlook. Suffice it to say that, except for the lapses mentioned above, the Mensheviks were remarkably well informed on Soviet events. Indeed, even after the Menshevik Trial *Vestnik* published articles such as the "Letters from Moscow" in 1933 and the "Letter of an Old Bolshevik" in 1936-7, which remain to this day basic sources for our knowledge of Soviet history. The overall outlook of the Mensheviks was defined by the so-called "Martov line." This can be summarized as a policy of "defending the

Russian Revolution" which meant support for the Soviet Union against its enemies from the right (as, for example, during the Civil War) but criticism of the regime for its pursuit of policies which the Mensheviks considered utopian and incoherent. Consensus concerning the "Martov line" was badly shaken after 1929 when, as a consequence of Stalin's "Great Turn," the Mensheviks, like many other parties of the Socialist International to which the Mensheviks belonged and in which they played an important role, found themselves increasingly divided. Some Mensheviks, notably F. Dan, clung to the Martov line and found themselves pushed ever further left toward an increasingly apologetic position. Others, notably R. Abramovitch, B. Nicolaevsky and D. Dallin evolved toward a total rejection of the Soviet regime.

## II

Given this background, what did the Mensheviks have to say about the famine? Their statements on this subject can be classified as predictive, descriptive or analytical. The rest of this paper will be devoted to a chronological account of the Mensheviks' statements on the famine according to these three categories.

The Mensheviks closely followed Soviet food and agricultural policies and their ramifications for the population. By June 1929 *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* reported over one thousand cases of mass resistance to collectivization and it noted the effects of Soviet dumping of agricultural products in the West.<sup>3</sup> It was in 1930, however, that the Mensheviks seriously began to predict the dire consequences of the new agricultural policy. Their alarm was aroused by sinister items of information filtering in from the Soviet Union: in April 1930 *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* cited an anonymous highly placed Bolshevik who had reportedly said that "we must destroy five million people in order to realize socialism in the countryside."<sup>4</sup> In the course of the same year *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* published a secret directive, attributed to Kaganovich, Baumann and Iagoda, and distinguishing three types of kulaks: those who were to be shot, those who were to be deported to the camps, and those who were to be expelled to another region.<sup>5</sup>

It was against the background of such ominous signals that the Mensheviks formulated their predictions. In an August 1930 editorial entitled "The War for Bread," *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* pointed out the great difficulties experienced by the Soviet authorities in reaching their harvest targets. One could not conclude that these targets would not be met, warned the journal, since Soviet bayonets were a compelling force. Nevertheless, attaining these targets would represent a Pyrrhic victory for the Bolsheviks, one which would aggravate, rather than solve their problems in the countryside. A letter from Moscow, pub-

lished in the same issue, had an equally pessimistic evaluation of the situation: agricultural production had fallen below 1916 levels. Moreover, widespread pilfering, pillage, wastage and destruction had made grain procurement, rather than grain production, the most pressing problem for the regime.<sup>6</sup> Thus, one could foresee a sharp worsening of the food situation in the cities, as regards meat and dairy products in 1930, and, if not in this year, then in 1931, penury would also extend to grain. Workers outside the major cities (Moscow and Leningrad) had long suffered food shortages. Now these shortages were reaching Moscow, as shown by the fact that Ukraine was no longer receiving food deliveries re-exported from Moscow as it used to do (however paradoxical this may sound in view of the major food producing role of Ukraine). Moscow itself showed signs of food shortages for its own inhabitants.<sup>7</sup>

A year later *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* made a provisional assessment of its predictions. In the course of 1930–1 much less grain had been collected from the fields than the previous year. However, the strength of the Soviet procurement apparatus was such that the regime had practically met its procurement objectives.<sup>8</sup> Obviously, such radical procurement policies did nothing to strengthen collective farms but, supposedly, they should have warded off the danger of famine in the cities. Nevertheless, by the following winter and spring (1932), *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* noted increasingly disturbing signs in the urban food situation. Prices, especially bread prices, had risen unexpectedly between 30 and 100 per cent.<sup>9</sup> Even at these prices bread was lacking. In Moscow, Leningrad and certain other big cities, those with access to “closed” shops could more or less subsist. In the smaller cities and towns one simply went hungry and only through hoarding could one be saved from perdition. In the countryside the situation was disastrous. In many regions peasants were fleeing collective farms and streaming into the cities looking for any sort of work.<sup>10</sup> The authorities’ efforts to compel the peasants to sow larger areas were proving unsuccessful so there were no perspectives of an improvement in grain production.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, noted *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, although Soviet grain exports had diminished in relation to previous years, the exports of all other food products had risen.<sup>12</sup>

### III

As the above survey indicates, after 1929 the Mensheviks were pointing with increasing frequency to the possibility of large-scale famine as a direct result of Stalin’s policies. However, after having predicted the disaster for three years, the Mensheviks seemed unprepared for the

scale of the tragedy when, in the summer of 1932, *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* began describing the famine.

Under the stark headlines "A Dire Crisis" and "Famine in Ukraine," the 25 June 1932 issue of *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* calculated that in the last two years grain procurement had multiplied fivefold but sown surfaces had only grown five to six per cent.<sup>13</sup> The result was "famine, absolute famine, political famine, and not a word is said of this in the Soviet press." The article concluded on a tone more dramatic than that usually adopted by the *Vestnik*: "In the fifteenth year of Soviet power, hunger, a new terrible hunger, clasps in its deadly embraces the most fertile areas of the country, the granary of Soviet Russia."<sup>14</sup> In the following months the *Vestnik* painted an increasingly vivid picture of the ravages wrought by the famine. As early as May 1932 a worker correspondent of the journal had calculated that just to feed his family he would need to earn fifty rubles a day, since bread was five rubles a pound and a chicken cost twenty-five rubles. The worker's wage, on the other hand, was one hundred rubles monthly.<sup>15</sup> Such dilemmas paled, however, before the image invoked by another correspondent of "three million people roaming through the country in search of bread. . . . At every station one sees their famished eyes. Throughout Ukraine the famine is indescribable. . . . People are eating bread made of grass and treebark."<sup>16</sup> As food queues grew in Moscow bitter disputes broke out among the Soviet leaders with prominent Bolsheviks arguing that industrial production could not increase as long as workers went hungry.<sup>17</sup> By the end of 1932 they were proven right when factory workers demanding food started laying down their tools and foreign experts began leaving the country as they could no longer obtain the hard currency which alone guaranteed some sort of food supplies.<sup>18</sup> Office workers, functionaries, and workers were all selling everything they owned in order to buy bread. Thievery on a huge scale was rampant as the food situation worsened with no prospects for improvement.<sup>19</sup>

Time and again, the *Vestnik* reminded its readers that the famine was man-made. Transports of grain were being destroyed in order to keep up the price of grain in Germany; this much was being reported in the German press but that press did not mention that the grain in question was Soviet.<sup>20</sup> Apparently, the fact that the Soviet government was not only exporting grain during a famine but was, in addition, inflicting hardship on the German working classes by forcing up prices in the most classical form of capitalist speculation, was too harsh a truth to be revealed to a German readership. Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union itself tens of thousands of tonnes of grain, hastily stockpiled in fear that otherwise the grain would be consumed or sold by the peasants, were



rotting in granaries. By the spring of 1933 the attention of the Bolshevik leadership was riveted on the international scene with Hitler's accession to power; the attention of the population in the capital, however, was completely absorbed by the famine. If this was the case in Moscow, one can surmise that hunger was the overriding concern in all other areas where the famine was much more acute. In many places edible bread had not been seen for six months and the cities overflowed with famished children.<sup>21</sup> The political situation caused by the famine was so tense that the *Vestnik* spoke of a pre-Kronstadt atmosphere and speculated on the possibilities of large-scale bread riots in the cities.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, one of the merits of the Menshevik account of the famine, from our point of view, is the extent to which it shows that the famine was not only a rural but an urban phenomenon as well.

The first signs of any improvement were noted in June 1933. This improvement, however, affected only Moscow and a few other large urban centres. It is clear that the *Vestnik's* correspondent did not have first-hand knowledge of the situation outside the main Russian centres but, from what he heard, "famine reigned in the Crimea, in the Caucasus, in Ukraine and on the Volga."<sup>23</sup> Only later in 1933 did the *Vestnik* manage to publish a report directly from the Ukrainian countryside which resembled a post-mortem.<sup>24</sup> Stalin had fulfilled his promise to destroy the kulak as a class, stated the *Vestnik*. He had also destroyed the middle (seredniak) and the poor peasantry (bedniak), not only politically but also physically. Although the collective farms represented a return to the miserable exploitation of feudal estates and although there was nothing socialist about them apart from their subordination to the plan, one had to admit that collective farms functioned. Indeed, even though the food allowance for collective farm workers was so small that it left nothing for their families, exclusion from collective farms was worse since it amounted to a death sentence by hunger.<sup>25</sup> The picture painted by the *Vestnik* was bleak and tragic but when it came to quantitative assessments, the Mensheviks were cautious. In other articles the *Vestnik* had estimated that millions of peasants had been excluded from collective farms and, from the *Vestnik's* own statements, one would be entitled to assume that they had perished from hunger. In fact, in the article on the Ukrainian countryside, perhaps referring only to local losses, the *Vestnik* confined itself to stating that collective farms had been built "at the price of the physical destruction of hundreds of thousands of people."

#### IV

Even as the famine was passing its crest the *Vestnik* turned its attention from description to analysis of the phenomenon. The *Vestnik* had in-

sisted throughout that this particular famine, in contrast to earlier ones, was entirely man-made. In an article entitled "Famine without Crop Failure," *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* commented that lately the foreign press was reporting that "millions were starving and thousands were dying of exhaustion and epidemic."<sup>26</sup> No one, however, was inquiring into the causes of the famine. To the extent the question was posed at all, the usual reply was to point to collectivization. Such a reply, claimed *Vestnik*, actually begged the question. In what way would collectivization cause famine? Did it reduce the areas sown or did it reduce the crops reaped? As the article pointed out, the amount of crops gathered in 1931-2 was higher than in 1928-9, yet there was no famine in the earlier period. Moreover, if collectivization was responsible for the famine one would have assumed a correlation between famine and the level of collectivization. No such correlation existed: in Ukraine 67 per cent of the land was collectivized whereas in the lower Volga 91 per cent was collectivized; the greatest hunger, however, occurred not in the lower Volga but in Ukraine. The real reasons for the famine, *Vestnik* concluded, lay not in collectivization but rather in the procurement policies of the regime.

These conclusions were developed with more force and detail some months later by the same author in an article entitled "Once Again on the Famine and its Causes."<sup>27</sup> The article took the form of a reply to the highly respected economist Professor S. N. Prokopovitch who had sought to establish that the cause of the famine lay not so much in the low level of crops harvested but rather in the quantity of bread available per capita under conditions of rapid demographic growth.<sup>28</sup> Essentially, Prokopovitch was putting the responsibility for the famine upon the urban workers who, by virtue of their increasing numbers, were siphoning off an ever larger portion of the agricultural produce. In reply, *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* expressed satisfaction that Prokopovitch, unlike most other observers, did not hold collectivization and the transition to mechanization as responsible for the famine but rather placed the blame squarely (and correctly, according to the *Vestnik*) on the regime procurement policies which removed all economic stimula from the peasants and systematically famished the countryside.<sup>29</sup> According to the *Vestnik*, Prokopovitch did stand to be corrected on several points: Prokopovitch claimed that the productivity of agriculture had risen considerably during NEP (New Economic Policy) and that it had begun to fall in the years of the First Five-Year Plan. This, claimed *Vestnik*, was only true in regard to livestock. In other branches of agriculture one noted an expansion of sown areas and of production, although this expansion proceeded very slowly and in "zig-zag" fashion. Moreover, Prokopovitch claimed that collective farms suffered the

most but, in fact, for the reasons already previously invoked by *Vestnik*, it was the individual peasant outside collective farms whose fate was the most desperate. Generally speaking, the Mensheviks would go even further than Prokopovitch in absolving the collectivization process as such of responsibility for the famine. If anything, they said, collectivization had softened the negative effects of forced grain procurement and of monopolistic state distribution. Above all, argued *Vestnik*, Prokopovitch was wrong in seeing the conflict as one between "town" and "country." The fundamental struggle, as the Mensheviks saw it, was being waged between the peasantry and the regime.

## V

The Mensheviks, to their credit, warned of the impending famine, were aware of some of its ravages, and correctly identified its causes in regime policies rather than in natural factors. In these respects, their record is better than that of most other Western observers and it is therefore not surprising that the Mensheviks' account should have been recognized as valuable at the time by at least some western chancelleries and that it is acknowledged as a valuable source of information today.<sup>30</sup> On the negative side, however, it is clear that the Mensheviks seriously underestimated the scale and intensity of the famine. Although one can infer from their articles that the number of famine victims must have been in the millions, the Mensheviks were reluctant to state a specific figure and when they did so the figure did not exceed "hundreds of thousands." The reasons for the limitations of the Menshevik analysis deserve close examination.

Part of the explanation for the Mensheviks' underestimation of the famine was conjunctural in nature: the disruption caused by the Menshevik Trial of 1931 and the flight of the Menshevik Foreign Delegation from Berlin in 1933. There were, however, more fundamental limitations to the Mensheviks' appreciation of the famine and the reasons for these limitations lay in the very nature of the party. The Mensheviks were a Marxist workers' party and this basic fact was both objectively and subjectively significant. Objectively, the problem was that the Mensheviks did not have a constituency in the countryside. At the best, they could hope to obtain second-hand reports about the situation outside the cities and these reports were necessarily filtered through the prism of urban dwellers' interests. For the urban population the problem of the famine was one of distribution rather than confiscation as it was for the peasants. Indeed, one could suggest that the city population had a positive interest in maximizing requisitions from the fields since this would increase the likelihood (though certainly not guarantee) that a greater supply would reach the city. This argument was invoked by

the Mensheviks in their discussions but, to their credit, it did not appear in the columns of *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the urban nature of the party did diminish its sensitivity to the plight of the peasant and it is perhaps significant that the Menshevik leader with the closest personal ties to the peasantry, Boris Nikolaevsky, was also the one most shaken by collectivization.<sup>32</sup>

From a subjective or ideological point of view, the problem of the Mensheviks was much more complex. Throughout the NEP period the Mensheviks had been following with profoundly mixed feelings what they saw as the growth of capitalist relations in the countryside. On the one hand, the development provided confirmation of a basic tenet concerning the inexorable growth of capitalism in Russia. On the other hand, this development, if unchecked, could jeopardize the gains of the Revolution and even lead to a counter-revolutionary restoration. Interestingly, there is evidence that the Menshevik analysis coincided to a large extent with that of the Bolsheviks and that the Soviet leadership drew openly and directly on the *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* in its debates.<sup>33</sup> In the light of their analysis and of their Marxist premises, the Mensheviks and especially those on the left flank of Menshevism, which happened to include the party's economists and agrarian experts (notably A. Iugov and O. Domnevskaiia), could only react favourably to the principle of collectivization. This explains why, in commenting on the famine, the Mensheviks' prime concern sometimes seems to be that of absolving collectivization policies of direct responsibility for the disaster.

In evaluating the Mensheviks' account of the famine one is led to conclude that the Mensheviks were both correct and perspicacious but that they were reluctant to draw conclusions from their own account. One can only hope that the other contributors to this volume will draw these conclusions for them.

## NOTES

1. This point was made over twenty years ago by John Keep, "From the Finland Station," *Survey*, no. 46 (1963): 162–6 and it still bears reiteration.
2. The following section is based on A. Liebich, *Les Mensheviks en exil face à l'Union soviétique*, ICES Research Report 4 (May 1982): 68 pages.
3. See Correspondence from Russia: "Nadvigaiushchaia katastrofa. Krestianskie vosstaniia v Pskovskoi gubernii i Gruzii. Zabastovki v Sormove i Orekhovo-Zueve. Ukhudshenie prodovolstvennogo polozheniia," *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, no. 12 (202), 14 June 1929, hereafter cited as SV; also

correspondence from Moscow, "Paralich krestianskogo khoziaistva. Golod na gorizonte. Krasnaia armia i kollektivizatsiia. Izbienie komunistov v derevne. Vosstaniia na Kavkaze," *SV*, no. 9 (223), 17 May 1930; Iu. Braginskaia, "Khlebnyi eksport iz golodnoi strany," *SV*, no. 14 (228), 26 July 1930. See also R. R. Abramovitch, *The Soviet Revolution 1917-1939* (New York 1962), chapter 15.

4. Correspondence from Moscow, "Vpechatleniia uchastnika agrarnogo pokhoda. Kolkhoznaia problema. Kak posle zemletriaseniia. Eshelony, rasstrely, aresty. Da zdarastvuet VKP, doloit kolkhozy. Mozhno li zagnat v kolkhozy milliony siloiu Fantasticheskie slukhi," *SV*, no. 6/7 (220-221), 12 April 1930.
5. Correspondence from Moscow, "Instruktsii Kaganovicha, Baumana i Iagody," *SV*, no. 6/7 (220/221), 12 April 1930. See also Abramovitch, *The Soviet Revolution*, 338.
6. Editorial, "Voina za khleb," *SV*, no. 16 (239), 30 August 1930. The term *zagotovka* can be translated as "requisition" or "procurement." Mikhail Bernstam has suggested to me that whereas the former translation applies to the period of War Communism, the latter is more appropriate in this context.
7. Correspondence from Moscow, "Tovarishch urozhai, krizis potrebleniia i finansovo-ekonomicheskie perspektivy," *SV*, no. 16 (230), 30 August 1930. It should be noted that the Mensheviks did not seem to call into question the rationality of a policy which called for exporting food from Ukraine to Moscow and then re-exporting it back to Ukraine.
8. O. Domanevskaia, "Vokrug urozhaia," *SV*, no. 19 (257), 8 October 1931. Domanevskaia who stood on the extreme left of the Menshevik party was the author of *Agrarsozialismus in Sowjetrussland: Bringt die Kollektivisierung den Ausweg?* (Berlin 1931).
9. Correspondence from Moscow, "Rost dorogovizny. Borba za khleb. . . ." *SV*, no. 4 (256), 27 February 1932.
10. Correspondence from Moscow, " . . . S prodovolstviem skverno" *SV*, no. 5 (266), 12 March 1932.
11. O. Domanevskaia, "Na posevnom fronte," *SV*, no. 6 (267), 26 March 1932.
12. A. Iugov, "Prodovolstvennyi tupik: nedoedanie i golod," *SV*, no. 7 (268), 16 April 1932. A member of the Menshevik Foreign Delegation, Iugov, was a noted economist, leading left-Menshevik and one of Dan's closest lieutenants. He was the author of the book *Piatiletka* with a post-face by F. Dan (n.p. /Berlin?/ n.d. /1931?/) which was translated into French, German and Swedish. Iugov was also author of *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Sovetskoï Rosii i ego problemy* (Berlin 1929), translated into English, German and Spanish, and a regular contributor on Soviet economic subjects to the German *Gesellschaft* and the Austrian *Kampf*.



13. Editorial, "Tiazhelyi krizis" and A. Iugov, "Golod na Ukraine," *SV*, no. 12 (273), 25 June 1932.
14. Iugov, "Golod na Ukraine."
15. Correspondence from Ukraine *SV*, no. 9 (270), 21 May 1932.
16. Correspondence from Russia, "Derevenskie nastroeniia. Golod. Unichtozhenie skota. Prodovolstvennye zatrudneniia v gorodakh. Na Ukraine," *SV*, no. 14 (275), 23 July 1932.
17. Correspondence from Moscow, "S prodovolstviem plokho. Golod na Ukraine. Opiat khlebnye ocheredi," *SV*, no. 13 (274), 9 July 1932; Correspondence from Russia, "Derevenskie nastroeniia," *SV*, no. 14 (275), 23-July 1932.
18. Correspondence from Moscow, "Na zavodakh trebuiut prodovolstviia. Inostrantsy begut ot goloda," *SV*, no. 24 (285), 24 December 1932.
19. Correspondence from Moscow, "Chastnik kormit. Vse voruiut. Golodno i kholodno. Sami, bez inostrantsev," *SV*, no. 22 (283), 26 November 1932; also correspondence from Moscow, "Prodovolstvennye zatrudneniia. Bankrotstvo tsentralnogo snabzheniia," *SV*, no. 19 (280), 15 October 1932.
20. D. D. [David Dallin], "Sovetskii khleb v Elbe," *SV*, no. 16 (277), 27 August 1932. Dallin, a member of the Foreign Delegation of the Mensheviks and an outstanding contributor on political and economic matters to the *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, later had a successful career as a Soviet specialist in the United States.
21. Correspondence from Moscow, "Obostreniie goloda i epidemii. Vyselenie," *SV*, no. 8 (294), 25 May 1933.
22. Editorial, "Predkronstadskie nastroeniia," *SV*, no. 24 (285), 24 December 1932.
23. Correspondence from Moscow, "Uluchsheniie pitaniia v Moskve. Prodovolstvennye muki po vsei strane," *SV*, no. 9 (294), 10 June 1933.
24. Correspondence from Russia, "V ukrainskoi derevne," *SV*, no. 18 (303), 25 September 1933.
25. A. Iugov, "Golod bez neurozhaia," *SV*, no. 14/15 (299/300), 27 August 1933.
26. Ibid.
27. A. Iugov, "Eshche o golode i o ego prichinakh," *SV*, no. 24 (309), 16 December 1933.
28. Sergei Prokopovitch, a minister of the Provisional Government of 1917, had founded an "Economic Cabinet" in Prague which published an *Economic Bulletin*. He was recognized as the leading authority in the West on the Soviet economy. His article had been published in the liberal émigré paper, *Poslednie Novosti*.
29. Iugov, "Eshche o golode i o ego prichinakh."
30. The former Bolshevik, Gr. Aleksinsky, who served as a French police in

former on Russian matters at the time frequently drew on *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* as his principal source of information on the famine. Archives Nationales, Archives de la Justice, F7 13501–13505.

31. See the discussion of V. A. Schwarz's (Vera Alexandrova's) lecture, "Mezhdunarodnoe polozhenie i russkaia sotsialdemokratiia," 28 January 1932, in *Protokoly Berlinskoi organizatsii* (roneotyped transcripts available at the I.I.S.G., Amsterdam).
32. L. K. D. Kristof, "B. I. Nicolaevsky: The Formative Years" in *Revolution and Politics in Russia: Essays in Memory of B. I. Nicolaevsky*, ed. A. and J. Rabinovitch, L. K. D. Kristof, (Bloomington-London 1972), 3–32.
33. N. V. Valentinov, "Du Boukharinisme au Stalinisme," *Le Contrat Social*, no. 7 (March-April 1964): 74.

# BLIND EYE TO MURDER: BRITAIN, THE UNITED STATES AND THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE OF 1933

*Marco Carynnyk*

Natural factors—drought, flood, blight—have been at least contributory causes of most famines. The Ukrainian famine of 1933, however, was entirely man-made, entirely the result of a dictator's genocidal policies. Otto Schiller, a German agricultural attaché in Moscow whose reports were so thorough that even Stalin read them, observed the regime's refusal to help the victims. "A distinctive feature of this famine," Schiller wrote after a visit to the stricken regions in the spring of 1933,

is that the authorities have not acknowledged, and do not now acknowledge, that famine exists. They even officially deny it. Accordingly, no assistance, either from the State or from benevolent institutions, is afforded. . . .

The Soviet Government itself does nothing. I was told of many cases of sufferers, swollen from famine, who implored help from the village soviets. They were told that they should eat the bread which they had got hidden away, and that no famine at all existed. In fact, the authorities explain the present situation by insisting that there is no lack of grain, that the peasants hid it, and it is only a matter of finding it. . . .

A million people could be fed, though poorly, upon 100,000 tonnes of grain from the beginning of the year until the end of July—a million saved from death by starvation. The Soviet Government exported 1,500,000 tonnes of grain from last year's crop.<sup>1</sup>

This policy of "squeezing" the peasants of Ukraine and the North Caucasus for as much food as possible—party activists often confiscated even baked bread and emptied pots of porridge—and doing nothing to alleviate the resulting starvation—led to one of the greatest famines in history and to the death of some six million people. In an extension of Russia's historic drive to absorb Ukraine, the land of the dead was colonized by Russian settlers (some of whom fled home when they could not stand the stench in cottages where corpses had lain untended). Then, in the purges of the mid-1930s, the activists who had brutalized the countryside were destroyed. Finally, their executors were themselves executed to ensure the safety of the supreme assassin.

These atrocities, which are so inadequately termed the "man-made famine" or "great famine," constitute one of the most horrifying crimes of our century. Yet the perpetration of this crime has been met by many with an indifference bordering on cynicism and by some with a conspiracy of silence that is itself little short of criminal. The primary reason for the silence, of course, is the calculated campaign of misinformation that the Soviet authorities mounted to conceal their doings. Declaring Ukraine out of bounds to reporters in order to hide the destruction they had wreaked and enlisting such complaisant foreigners as George Bernard Shaw, French Prime Minister Edouard Herriot and Walter Duranty, Stalin and his minions made denial of the famine an integral part of Soviet foreign policy. That they did so is not surprising.

Had the Soviet government acknowledged the famine and accepted relief (it could not very well acknowledge the famine and then reject aid), it would have made a concession to the Ukrainian peasants. But since Stalin was effectively at war with them, such a compromise would have amounted to an admission of defeat and a drop in international standing precisely at a time when he was propagandizing the economic and social triumph of the five-year plan. "When it is a matter of inflicting suffering upon individuals or classes which block the realization of their dreams," observed William Henry Chamberlin, an American correspondent who visited the famine regions, "dictators are hardboiled to the last degree. But they are as sensitive as the most temperamental artist when the effects of their ruthless policies are criticized, or even when they are stated objectively without comment."<sup>2</sup> Striving for diplomatic recognition by the United States (and the economic benefits that recognition would bring), admission into the League of Nations and non-aggression treaties with European powers, Stalin could not tolerate criticism of his five-year plan or admit that people were dropping dead of hunger in the streets of Kiev and Poltava.

Stalin's heirs have continued to pursue his policy of concealment and denial. Denouncing his predecessor's crimes in his famous "secret

speech" of 1956, Khrushchev argued that as one of Stalin's "great services" collectivization had to be carried to its logical end; he studiously avoided mentioning the decimation of Ukraine. And as recently as 4 December 1983, the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa attacked Brian Mulroney, the Progressive Conservative leader, for repeating "a 100-per-cent lie" in reminding a commemorative rally in Toronto that the famine was "man-made, orchestrated and directed from Moscow." Announcing that his government had filed a protest with the Department of External Affairs, the Soviet press attaché complained that Mr. Mulroney's speech at the fourth World Congress of Free Ukrainians was a breach of the Helsinki agreement, signed by Canada and the USSR among other countries, in 1975.<sup>3</sup>

The Soviet campaign has been largely successful. Many otherwise knowledgeable people wonder to this day whether a famine occurred and, if so, whether it was not the fault of the Ukrainian peasants themselves. But the Soviet lie would not have been so widely believed if many in the West had not condoned it. Long ignored archival evidence shows that several Western governments, including Britain, Canada and the United States, were well informed about the horrors of the famine and yet turned a blind eye to murder.

By virtue of its importance in European affairs and its sophisticated intelligence network, the British government had access to an unparalleled range of information about Eastern Europe. In the course of 1932 and 1933, the Foreign Office in London received from its embassy in Moscow weekly and often even daily dispatches which detailed what was happening in the Ukrainian countryside. The information in these dispatches came from diplomats, foreign correspondents, British subjects living in the Soviet Union and Soviet citizens.

As early as January 1930, shortly after the First Five-Year Plan was inaugurated, Sir Esmond Ovey, the British ambassador to Moscow, foresaw that trouble might arise from the "hostility of the peasant and small proprietor class . . . [which] are being hardly treated and are being literally, when recalcitrant, bullied out of existence." Even at this early date Ovey thought that famine was likely, because the Soviet government could "be counted on not to be deflected by the death of even hundreds of thousands of peasants in a given district."<sup>4</sup> Ovey's presentiment proved to be correct within two years. "There are stories going about Moscow," he wrote to the Foreign Office in March 1932,

that traffic between the Ukraine and the consuming regions lying to the north of it is closely controlled, no one being allowed to bring more than 1,000 roubles out from the Ukraine, and all grain in the possession of private persons entering the Ukraine being confiscated. The Ukraine is, nor-



mally, the granary which feeds these consuming areas, but the granary, it is said, has been stripped very bare and some of the population in both town and country in the Ukraine is short of food. The peasants and others have therefore taken to coming to the more plentifully supplied industrial areas to buy back some of their own grain, and it is this that the control system is designed to prevent, lest industrial areas should be denuded and the urban workers, the proletariat *par excellence*, should go short.<sup>5</sup>

In early May 1932, William Strang, the counsellor of the British embassy, informed Sir John Simon, the British foreign secretary, that the crisis was growing more acute:

For the population at large this has been the hardest winter since 1921. There have been few signs of unusual hardship in Moscow itself. . . . But in provincial towns and over large stretches of the countryside, there is another story to tell. Recent visitors to the Ukraine report that the bread ration, even for manual workers themselves, has been cut down; that members of workers' families and other employees and their families have no ration of bread at all and have to supply themselves with bread as best they can outside the co-operatives, at prices which swallow up the greater part, or even the whole, of the workers' wages on bread alone. They also confirm, as already reported in previous despatches, that the Ukrainian peasants have been left in a state approaching famine after successive grain collections, whether for the needs of the towns, or for the war reserve, or for export, or for seed purposes in other areas, and that many of them move to the towns in search of bread. . . . At the barrage works at Dnieprostroi, in addition to the ordinary worker, who is entitled to a reduced ration of 400 or 600 grammes [of bread] a day, there are said to be gangs of pressed workers, who receive no more than 200 grammes.<sup>6</sup>

A few days later, Strang reported to London that although the harvest of 1931 was considerably inferior to that of 1930, the amount of grain collected by the state was appreciably greater. The peasants in many wide areas had been left very short, and the prospects for the next harvest were doubtful. "The brutal fact . . . remains," concluded Strang, "that, at the opening of the fourth and final year of the Five-Year Plan, masses of the population outside the largest towns and industrial areas have not enough to eat."<sup>7</sup>

In May 1932, Ovey took a ten-day trip to Ukraine. "The people are reported everywhere to be quiet—numb, perhaps with apprehension," the ambassador advised the Foreign Office on his return to Moscow. "At the present moment there would appear to be considerable shortage of food in Western Ukraine, shortage in the Eastern portion and probably definite want in the Volga area."<sup>8</sup>

The longest, most detailed and most vivid reports about the famine were written not by embassy staff, but by a Canadian wheat expert named Andrew Cairns who in the spring and summer of 1932 spent four months touring the major grain-growing regions of the Soviet Union. Born in Scotland, educated at the University of Alberta and experienced as a wheat farmer, he had been assigned by the Empire Marketing Board in London to assess the significance of Soviet agriculture for the world wheat market. The Foreign Office placed the highest value on Cairns' memoranda and thought that the "hair-raising revelations" to be found in them deserved to be drawn to the attention of government departments, the Dominions Office and the delegates to the Imperial Economic Conference, which was convened in Ottawa in August 1932 to set quotas on the import of wheat and lumber.

In Ukraine and the North Caucasus, where wheat and rye were the staples of life, the Soviet government had created famine by expropriating the farmers' grain; in Central Asia, where nomadic tribes had been raising cattle for centuries, the government's policy was to confiscate livestock, both to increase its supplies of meat and to force the nomads to become sedentary. The ensuing famine, Cairns discovered, had already killed "many, many thousands" of Kirghizians, and another million could be expected to die. Many were fleeing east to China and north to Siberia in search of food:

At every station I saw hundreds of them—all thin, cold, rag-clad, hungry and many begging for bread. At one station I saw 500 of them in a cattle train being taken to work in Kuznets. In Slavgorod many of them (I have photographs of them) were begging for bread, some getting on their knees and others lying down to do it. In two days motoring in one direction from Slavgorod I saw many small groups of Kirgizians camping on the prairie—every group beside a horse which had died and all eating the meat for food, and drying the skin in the sun to make boots, etc. In one place on the prairie I counted 22 Kirgizian graves (it is easy to tell their graves as they are very high, the dead being buried sitting, facing the East). . . . The reason for the sad fate of the poor natives of Kazakhstan was, of course, the government collections of livestock.<sup>9</sup>

From Central Asia Cairns proceeded to tour Ukraine and the North Caucasus for six weeks. In early August 1932 he drafted two cables, one for publication and one, classified "Strictly Confidential," for transmission by the Empire Marketing Board to the Dominions, summarizing the prospects for the year's harvest. "There was acute widespread hunger and not inappreciable amount actual starvation," cabled

Cairns. "Practically unanimous bitter hostility of collective and individual peasants alike will seriously interfere with governments collection plans. . . . Have specific data of further very heavy losses of all classes of livestock this year in Ukraine and Caucasus. . . ." <sup>10</sup>

A week later the British embassy forwarded to London the full report of Cairns' trip to Ukraine and the North Caucasus. Every station that he stopped at, observed Cairns, "had its crowd—from scores to several hundred, depending on the size of the town—of rag-clad hungry peasants, some begging for bread, many waiting, mostly in vain, for tickets, many climbing on to the steps or joining the crowds on the roof of each car, all filthy and miserable and not a trace of a smile anywhere. . . . At the depot in Kiev many people asked for bread."

Going for a walk in Kiev, Cairns came across a small bazaar where a woman told him that there was practically no bread because the government had collected so much grain for export. The collective farms round Kiev were very bad, she said. All the members were hungry and many were leaving. She herself had left her village, with many others, because she could not get food and some people were dying of starvation. Now she had a job in Kiev, but she could not buy much food with her small salary and was always hungry. Other women told Cairns, in answering his question why they did not belong to collectives, that they had not joined, or had left, because they and their children were very hungry. On the way back to his hotel Cairns discovered a man dying on the street. "He was apparently insane as he was going through all the motions of eating and rubbing his stomach with apparent satisfaction. A crowd had gathered round, and some people, thinking that the man was begging, dropped a few coins, but he was quite unconscious and soon stopped moving." Outside a food store, where swarms of people were buying and selling bits of bread, rotten vegetables and fish scales, Cairns asked several people why things were so dear. Seeing that he did not understand a word of Ukrainian, they pulled in their cheeks, pretended to vomit, drew their fingers across their throats and said, in Russian, "There's nothing to eat. Nothing at all." On another walk Cairns stopped to give coins to three small girls—they were nearly dead with hunger, and the smallest one would not live more than a few days longer—and a crowd gathered to tell him that there were many such children throughout the country.

From Kiev Cairns travelled to Dnipropetrovsk, in eastern Ukraine. At every station there were hundreds or thousands of "miserable, hungry people," who were fleeing from the famine and searching for food and many of whom were fighting to get on to the roof, the couplings or the steps of the train. In Dnipropetrovsk one evening he saw thirty-five men and women being herded down the street by six militiamen with

drawn revolvers, and the following morning he saw about forty tattered and hungry children being escorted by militiamen. Here in the heart of Ukraine, where much wheat had been confiscated the previous year for export, wheat meal was selling at 20 to 25 times its international value, and given their low wages workers could not buy nearly enough bread to feed themselves. At the depot in the town of Salsk in the North Caucasus, many men and children were begging for bread, and a few women were sitting in the filth looking at their starving children. And in Rostov Cairns was taken to see a propaganda film about the complete liquidation of homelessness among children in the Soviet Union. Coming out of the theatre, he was approached by three children who asked for money to buy bread. Cairns and Vyvyan (the embassy secretary who travelled part of the way with Cairns) returned to Moscow in the international sleeper on the crack new Kharkiv-Moscow express, for which privilege they each paid ninety roubles.

However, the sting was removed by an attendant in a fine uniform with spotlessly clean white gloves, who lifted his cap and bowed to us as we entered the train. As we watched the teeming crowds of rag-clad people in and around the depot, and also a very large group of soldiers boarding a special train, we thought of the Revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and of our aristocratic train with its white-gloved attendant.<sup>11</sup>

In August 1932 the Soviet government issued an infamous law that imposed the death penalty for the theft of "socialist property." Stealing an ear of wheat from a field was now a capital offence. Two weeks later the government passed a law making speculation in connection with collective farm trade punishable by five to ten years' imprisonment. Strang explained to London the implications of the two laws:

The first of these decrees is directed ostensibly against "class-enemies, chiefly kulaks," the second against speculators. In actual fact, the chief object of the first decree is to put an end to the practice of peasants . . . who, because they are hungry or afraid for the future, or both, are taking grain produced either by themselves or others and consuming or hiding it. The main purpose of the second . . . is to prevent collective farms and individual peasants from selling their grain on the open market. . . . Both decrees are dictated by anxiety for the success of the coming grain-collection campaign, which is threatened . . . by the consuming hunger of the peasants (of which Mr. Cairns's reports of his travels about the country between Western Siberia and the Ukraine bear constant witness), and their determination not to go hungry again next winter if they can help it. . . .<sup>12</sup>



A few days later E. A. Walker, the first secretary of the embassy, gave a further explanation of the decree against pilferage. Although the decree was ostensibly directed against theft in general, it was being applied only to the theft of food in the countryside, and the Soviet press had listed a number of cases of "kulaks" stealing grain, especially in the Vinnytsia district, where "the conditions of agriculture are unusually unsatisfactory even for the Soviet Union." "Where the need and distress is as great as it is in the U.S.S.R. at the present time," concluded Walker, "a bushel of wheat is indeed precious, and doubtless for that reason the unfortunate population will risk imprisonment or even the death penalty and go to any lengths to get something which can make its life a little less unpleasant, or indeed for that matter physically possible."<sup>13</sup> Letters from Ukrainian Canadians who had returned to their homeland and then, finding themselves in the midst of a famine, turned as British subjects to the British Embassy in Moscow, were another source of information for the Foreign Office. One Ukrainian Canadian wrote that working people had been reduced to "starvation, barbarity and cannibalism." "England, save us who are dying of hunger!" he pleaded.<sup>14</sup>

In mid-May 1933, at the height of the famine, the British chargé d'affaires in Moscow informed Whitehall that the number of unsolicited letters from Soviet correspondents "increases as the economic crisis in this country becomes more acute. In the last week an anonymous letter has been received which opens as follows: 'We request you, Mr. Representative, to approach your government for our protection and with the object of saving the starving people of the USSR, who are living on all kinds of rotten stuff, carrion, marmots and cannibalism,' and concludes by declaring that 'we are perishing and you are being appealed to by thousands of hungry peasants and workers.'"<sup>15</sup>

Two weeks later the British chargé d'affaires reported that Soviet citizens were continuing to write or to visit the embassy. One caller appeared at the embassy with a "large portfolio full of documents" which "related to the widespread famine which affected certain districts from which he had just returned, and regarding which the world was in utter ignorance. He was then told that the Embassy was not in want of further information, and left with reluctance."<sup>16</sup>

Another letter to the British ambassador reported that "in Ukraine millions of the population have died from hunger. The population would be glad to eat carrion but there is none to be found. People are . . . digging up horses that have died from glanders and are eating them, and finally they have not only invented the method of killing and eating each other but also dig up dead bodies and eat them."<sup>17</sup>

Still another dispatch in Whitehall's possession consisted of a lengthy



report by Otto Schiller, who had travelled widely in Ukraine and the North Caucasus in the spring of 1933 and who often shared his information with British colleagues. "The famine is not so much the result of last year's failure of crops as of the brutal campaign of State grain collection," he wrote.

Therefore even such localities as the northern districts of North Caucasia, in which the crops were quite satisfactory, did not escape. . . .

In the villages I visited the number of deaths varied between twenty and thirty a day. Those still alive are enfeebled in the extreme through semi-starvation and also by the eating of such unnatural food as grass, roots, charred bones, dead horses etc. And the majority will doubtless die from malaria with the on-come of the warm weather, this disorder having prevailed to an unprecedented extent since last autumn. The typhus which now appears sporadically will probably become an epidemic. It is feared that with the new crop a new wave of mortality will devastate the country, when the famished people for the first time will eat their fill of the new bread and fresh vegetables. . . .

The present situation in the Northern Caucasus may be summed up as follows. In some of the villages the population is almost extinct. In others about half the population have died out. And there are still villages in which death from famine is not so frequent. But famine reigns everywhere, at least in those regions which I have visited.<sup>18</sup>

In mid-July 1933, the British Embassy submitted one of its most detailed dispatches about the famine:

It is hardly necessary to confirm the notorious fact that on the eve of the harvest conditions semi-famine still continues to obtain over large areas of the Soviet Union. Unauthorized estimates of the number of people who have died, either directly or indirectly, from malnutrition in the past year vary up to as much as the fantastic figure 10 million. . . .

I am told by a member of the German Embassy that in the German Agricultural Concession in the North Caucasus, five men have been employed in gathering and burying the corpses of peasants who have come in from outside this oasis of plenty in search of food and have died. . . .

One of the erectors employed by Metropolitan-Vickers in Ukraine says that people died of starvation in the block of apartments in which he lived, one of them outside his door. He says he refused to believe the stories he heard of conditions in the villages outside and walked out to see for himself; he found, as he had been told, that some villages were completely deserted, the population having died or fled, and that corpses were lying about the houses and streets. . . .

His Majesty's Consul in Moscow is occasionally visited by Canadians [of Ukrainian origin] settled in Ukraine who tell him the same dreary, if less lurid, story of want, hopelessness and desolation. . . .

Such is the condition of the country in the first year of the second Five-Year Plan, on the eve of the fourth collectivized harvest. It is one which causes the authorities some preoccupation, but little apprehension or alarm. The suffering and death inflicted upon the population are regarded as the normal casualties of a nation-wide operation in class warfare (a class war to end classes) in which the authorities are confident that victory will be theirs.

London accepted the report at face value. "This dispatch gives a gloomy picture of living conditions in the USSR," wrote a Foreign Office official. "It is clear that real famine exists in many country districts, and that the Soviet Government [is] not particularly concerned about it."<sup>19</sup>

In early August 1933, the British consul in Moscow wrote a memorandum about the conditions at the infamous White Sea Canal Works, where hundred of thousands of peasants—many of them "dekulakized" Ukrainians—were worked to death. The memo provided a shocking description of their diet:

Work was done on the payment by results system, i.e., the amount of rations received depended on the manner [in which] the allotted task was completed. For this purpose the workers became divided into three classes. . . . Before going to work at 6 A.M., a spoonful of cold porridge was served, the size of the spoon being different for each class of worker. . . .

Work lasted without a break until 4 P.M., when it finished for the day. The first class then received 1,300 grams of bread each, the second 1,000 grams, and the third 500 grams. In addition, they received weak fish soup and a little porridge, again according to class, the third class being excluded from the porridge. They also received a small ration of sugar occasionally and some unrecognizable product which was termed "tea."

"I have seen accounts of worse conditions than these in other labour camps," commented a member of the Foreign Office staff. "So far as food is concerned these people seem to be better off than the peasants in Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus."<sup>20</sup>

In September 1933, the embassy disclosed that the establishment of an "All-Union Committee on Migration," which was being formed to "utilise sparsely inhabited, but fertile areas," indirectly confirmed the enormous famine toll. The reference to sparsely inhabited areas should

not be taken to mean that new areas were to be brought under cultivation, explained the embassy. Many farms in those regions where there had been no famine were overpopulated and could shed some of their surplus members if room could be found for them elsewhere:

The fact that the new decree implies that room can now be found [for new settlers] may be interpreted as a sinister admission of the depopulation resulting from this year's famine. Whether such estimates of famine losses as Dr. Schiller's, namely, between 5 and 10 million deaths in the present year, are reliable or not, there is no doubt that many villages are entirely depopulated, and I have heard from other travellers that it is not uncommon to find villages with a black flag flying at each end of the central street, signifying that none of the population are left as the result of starvation and flight. . . . It may be expected that these [villages] will be selected as the "sparsely inhabited, but fertile areas" to which the Government's migration programme will apply.<sup>21</sup>

In late August 1933, Edouard Herriot, who had until recently been the prime minister of France and was expected to become prime minister again, made a well-publicized two weeks' tour of the Soviet Union. Arriving by ship in Odessa, he travelled to Kiev and Kharkiv in Ukraine and Rostov in the North Caucasus. At every stop he visited scientific institutes, museums, factories, cathedrals, children's colonies and collective farms, where lunches prepared from the produce of the farms were invariably served. He was, of course, being shown Potemkin villages, and many Ukrainians still alive today remember how the streets of their cities were cleared of famine victims, whether dead or alive; priests who had been arrested during an anti-religious campaign were dragged out of prison to help serve Mass; children in orphanages were served meals of chicken and rice which were taken away immediately after Herriot's party had left; and actors were issued folk costumes to play the part of contented collective farmers. From the Soviet point of view, the trip was an unqualified success. Photographed and filmed at every stage of his trip, Herriot waxed enthusiastic to the reporters who were following him about the collectivization of agriculture and denounced any talk of famine as Nazi propaganda. The British, however, were not taken in. "The red carpet which the Soviet Government spread before the feet of its distinguished guests has now become proverbial," the embassy confided to London,

and on this occasion the Soviet authorities were at pains to see that the carpet was of extra width, of splendid texture, of the deepest pile and most carefully brushed. My German colleagues inform me that their

three consuls in the Ukraine reported unanimously that rigorous steps were taken to keep all undesirable elements far removed from the streets and the railway stations through which M. Herriot passed, and that extra rations of food, taken from the army reserve, and even clothes were issued to the townspeople.

The Foreign Office concurred:

M. Herriot seems surprisingly gullible. He even informed journalists after he had left Russia, that the reports of famine in the Ukraine were gross libels (though this is no doubt largely explained by the methods of deception practised on him . . . which are reminiscent of those practised by Potemkin on Catherine II, on her famous journey to the Crimea).<sup>22</sup>

Another well-informed observer was William Henry Chamberlin, the Moscow correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. In October 1933, London received a summary of Chamberlin's findings during a ten-day trip to Ukraine and the North Caucasus:

In the Poltava area [Chamberlin] found one commune where there had been no deaths from starvation, but in the villages round about there was no single place without some deaths from starvation. . . . The worst place he himself saw was the village of Cherkes, near Bila Tserkva, south of Kiev. In this village most of the houses were empty and dilapidated, and of a former population of 2,000, 640 had died and 480 had fled.

In a house entered at random in village near Poltava he found a young girl, who told him that her father was out working and that her mother and four brothers and sisters had died of starvation. In the Cossack settlements in the Kuban [in the North Caucasus] all the dogs and cats had been eaten and the people had even been forced to eat weeds. . . . A common remark made to him by peasants, and on one occasion by a servant girl in a hotel, was that no imperialist war had ever cost so many lives as this year's famine. . . .

Mr. Chamberlin says that there is no doubt at all that famine was general in Ukraine this last year. This fact was confirmed to him at station after station on his journey through the country. Nor is there any doubt that the North Caucasus is a semi-devastated region which would almost have to be recolonized.

Whitehall accepted Chamberlin's findings without reservations (and found them important enough to circulate to the King, the Cabinet and the Dominions). As a senior Foreign Office official put it, "This is, to

my mind, the most reliable summing up of the situation in the USSR as regards the famine and as regards this year's harvest that we have received. On both these points it fits in with our reports from other sources.'"<sup>23</sup>

These and hundreds of other documents bearing on the famine in the Foreign Office files leave no doubt that the British government knew in great detail what was happening in Ukraine in 1933. So did the Canadian government. Although it had not yet developed an independent foreign policy and its relations with Moscow were being handled by Whitehall, Canada did receive copies of the more telling dispatches.

But what about the United States? How well informed was Washington about events in Ukraine?

Unlike Britain, the United States did not play a major role in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and it established an embassy in Moscow only in March 1934, several months after the Roosevelt administration granted diplomatic recognition to the Soviet government in November 1933. Nonetheless, information about the famine did reach Washington, particularly from the American Legation in Riga, Latvia, which had been established in the 1920s as a listening post on the Soviet Union. Early in October 1933, the Riga legation forwarded to the State Department a memo concerning "food conditions" in the Soviet Union:

In reply to a question as to whether there is any foundation for the reports of the foreign press that there is famine in Russia, our informant replied that famine in Russia is an actual fact, and that last winter and spring its existence was frankly admitted on several occasions by officials of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to members of the Moscow diplomatic corps.

In the general opinion of the Moscow diplomats the present famine is even more severe than that of 1921-1922, and the number of people who have died from starvation is estimated at 7 to 8 million. While shortage of bread and other food is prevalent throughout Russia, *it is most acute in the southern wheat belt, i.e., in the North Caucasian krai, Ukraine and the Lower Volga krai*, where practically all peasants have been assembled into collective farms. . . .

Asked whether in his opinion the Soviet government would permit the organization of a foreign famine relief, similar to the one organized in 1921, our informant replied in the negative. The policy of collectivization, he said, was too closely associated with the name of Stalin for an open admission of its failure to be made without grave injury to his prestige as the leader of the Communist Party.

That is also one of the reasons why collectivization could not be aban-



doned at the present moment. In distinction from the situation prevailing in 1921, the Soviet government is confident of its strength to suppress any attempt at insubordination on the part of the population, and has resolved to deal with peasants who are reluctant to work under the collective farm system by means of severe punitive measures.<sup>24</sup>

In mid-October 1933, the American minister in Athens forwarded to the State Department a memo on "famine conditions in Russia":

In view of the many published statements denying the seriousness of famine conditions in Russia, I have the honor to report that . . . the Turkish Envoy at Moscow reported that famine conditions throughout Russia are at the present time very bad indeed, as bad, he said, as during the worst post-war years. . . .

He said [the Soviets] had committed themselves to the policy of communizing agriculture and that though this policy is already doomed to failure because of the continuing intransigence of the peasantry, and the impossibility of killing off the bulk of the population, they could not now draw back and save face.<sup>25</sup>

In May 1935, many months after the famine had ended, the State Department requested its embassy in Moscow to provide an opinion as to whether famine conditions had existed in 1934 and 1935. In October 1935, the American Embassy submitted a report in which it wrote:

The Embassy believes . . . that during the last twenty months there have been severe shortages of food in various sections of the country, particularly in certain rural sections, and that the health of many persons has been seriously undermined as a result of not having received the proper kinds and a sufficient quantity of foodstuffs.

Practically all impartial foreign observers qualified to speak with respect to conditions in the Soviet Union would agree, it is believed, with the opinions of the Embassy. . . .

It is also the opinion of the Embassy that for political or other reasons the distributing institutions have over certain periods deliberately deprived certain districts of their full quota of foodstuffs in order to make increased allotments available to other sections. . . .

There seems little doubt that if the supply of foodstuffs . . . had been efficiently and evenly distributed during the last twenty months to all persons in the country in accordance with their actual needs, much suffering resulting from undernourishment would have been avoided. . . .

Such information as the Embassy has been able to obtain causes it to be-

lieve that a considerable number of persons have starved to death during the last twenty months in the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup>

Thus there can be no doubt that, like London, Washington knew the basic facts about the famine, even though the two governments did not always appreciate its true nature and extent.

But what conclusions did London and Washington draw, and what practical measures did they take? Did they try to conduct an investigation or to provide relief through such established channels as the International Red Cross?

Although it often used such dangerously vague phrases as "large areas of the Soviet Union" or "the south of Russia," the Foreign Office was aware that the famine was centred in Ukraine and the North Caucasus. And although it sometimes revealed a confusion about the nature of the famine by referring to it as an unforeseen consequence of Soviet agricultural policy, the Foreign Office also understood that the famine was man-made—the result of a deliberate policy of confiscating grain—and thus entirely preventable. "As Tacitus' Romans 'made a solitude, and called it peace,' so the Soviet Government have made a famine, and called it communism," wrote Laurence Collier, the head of the Northern Department at the Foreign Office, after he had read one of Cairns' reports.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, Whitehall was keen to have more information about the famine than its embassy was providing. When British diplomats in Moscow turned away the young man who had brought a portfolio of documents about the famine, on the grounds that they had all the information they needed, Sir Robert Vansittart, the permanent under secretary of state, instructed his staff to reprimand the embassy for discouraging such informants. On 4 September 1933, the Foreign Office drew the attention of the embassy to articles about the famine that had appeared in British papers and commented:

The adverse reports in the majority of the papers here are of course denied by the "Daily Worker" and such-like, but while we realize that the existence of famine conditions in parts of Russia may not necessarily imply a bad harvest, we think that the evidence goes to show that the harvest in many parts of the country has been far less satisfactory than the Soviet authorities anticipated,—and that not only on account of defective machinery and arrangements. In the Ukraine, of course, it is admitted to have been most unsatisfactory. . . .

It is important to us to have as accurate and unbiased information as possible on this subject, and while we fully appreciate how difficult it is for

you to furnish us with much information from sources other than Soviet official reports and press articles, we are always glad of anything giving the other side of the picture that you can get—e.g. periodical summaries or extracts from letters written by Soviet citizens . . . or reports of interviews with Soviet visitors to the Embassy. . . .

Vansittart recently asked why the two visitors . . . were turned away, and pointed out that it is the legitimate business of the Embassy to learn all it can, when information is volunteered; any risk involved is, after all, run by the informant. The fact that such visitors are not frequent makes it all the more desirable to hear what they have to say when they do turn up.

We shall therefore be glad if you (and His Majesty's Consulates) will make the most of every opportunity for supplementing official reports as to conditions in the Soviet Union; and we need hardly add that we should welcome your own comments or estimate of the true state of affairs—whether in the matter of the harvest, famine, industrial conditions, or whatever it may be. . . .<sup>28</sup>

The last sentence is revealing. Even when they sought more facts about the famine, the bureaucrats at the Foreign Office did not think those facts to be of exceptional interest or importance. Harvest, famine, industrial conditions, or whatever it may be—it was all grist for the millstones of intelligence to grind to a fine, grey powder. Men are accomplices, George Steiner observed about Gentiles and the Holocaust, to that which leaves them indifferent.

The first relief organization to express its concern for the victims of the Ukrainian famine was the Save the Children Fund. In August 1933, L. B. Golden, the general secretary of the Fund, turned to the Foreign Office for advice. The Fund had been receiving reports about the famine both from the press and from private letters. Yet the Soviet embassy in London had assured the Fund that the harvest was a "bumper one." The Fund had no intention of embarrassing the British government by issuing an appeal for donations after the Soviet government had denied the existence of famine, but Golden thought that Moscow might be forced to acknowledge the existence of the famine during the coming winter and asked for an opportunity to discuss the matter with someone familiar with the question. The Foreign Office urged the Fund to remain silent. "The line to take," an official recommended, "is that, while information available here tends to confirm that famine conditions exist in some parts of Russia, there can be no question of issuing an appeal unless and until the Soviet authorities admit that conditions merit such assistance."<sup>29</sup> No such Soviet admission ever came, of course. Instead, at the end of the famine year Soviet President Mikhail Kalinin attacked the relief organizations that had tried to do something

about the famine. "Political impostors ask contributions for the "starving" of Ukraine," he orated. "Only degraded disintegrating classes can produce such cynical elements."<sup>30</sup>

The first organization to appeal on behalf of the victims of the famine was the European Federation of Ukrainians Abroad, in Brussels, which in September 1933 submitted a memorandum about the famine and asked London to urge the Soviet government to permit a relief operation. The plea was not answered. "No particulars of this organization can be traced," a Whitehall official minuted. "While the deplorable account which it gives of conditions in Ukraine is no doubt largely true, it is anti-Soviet in complexion and I presume that we can only ignore its appeal." A second official concurred: "As long as the Soviet Govt. continue to deny the existence of famine conditions in Ukraine and the N. Caucasus they will certainly refuse to accept any representation of the kind suggested."<sup>31</sup>

In July 1933, Ukrainians in Western Ukraine, which was then a part of Poland, formed a committee to organize relief for their fellow Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. The committee turned, naturally, to the League of Nations, the highest international body in the interwar period, and in September 1933 sent delegates to Geneva to lobby the League to place the famine on its agenda. Ukrainians in Canada and the United States, the delegates announced, were ready to offer food to their starving brothers, if the League would make it possible to transport and distribute the food under international supervision. The Ukrainians' chances of getting a member of the League to place the famine on the agenda were slim: the League's charter forbade it to discuss issues that concerned non-members or to become involved in the "internal affairs" of any state. And indeed, the Council at first refused to consider the appeal.

Fortunately for the Ukrainians, the president of the Council was the Norwegian diplomat Johann Mowinckel. As the representative of a country that was not involved in the great-power game and was proud of the tradition of humanitarian aid established by Fritjof Nansen, who had organized the League's relief campaign for Russia during the famine of 1921, Mowinckel circumvented the procedural restrictions by submitting the Ukrainian appeal not to a full meeting of the Council but to what was described, with fastidious delicacy, as a private consultation between members of the Council. After a long and heated discussion—some members were reluctant to turn down flatly a humanitarian proposal—the Council decided to tell the petitioners that the only course open to them was an appeal to the International Red Cross. The advice was of no practical use. The Red Cross promptly asked Moscow whether it would allow a relief operation in Ukraine, and Moscow

replied, with equal alacrity, that there was no famine and no relief was needed.<sup>32</sup> When the British delegation to Geneva, which had not supported the petition in the Council, forwarded to London the papers that Mowinckel had circulated, the Foreign Office concluded that "in the circumstances, no other action at Geneva was possible, and none seems possible here."<sup>33</sup>

Having failed to persuade Western governments and the League of Nations to take action, the Ukrainians began to search for allies among influential Britons. In September and October 1933 representatives of the Save the Children Fund, the Federation of Jewish Organizations and the Society of Friends, as well as several Ukrainians who had been in Geneva, met in London to discuss how they might organize relief. On 27 October, a delegation consisting of Colonel Cecil Malone, a prominent Labour MP, and Mrs. Christie and Miss Nike, who had years of experience in Quaker relief work, visited Collier in the hope of enlisting the help of the British government in persuading Moscow to allow a relief mission to enter Ukraine.

Collier pointed out that Moscow would not permit any foreign organization to conduct relief in the USSR. It had expelled Quaker relief workers without giving a reason, and it had even made it difficult to provide aid for British subjects in the Soviet Union. But the chief obstruction was that two Ukrainian members of the Romanian Parliament and the manager of the Ukrainian Bureau in London were connected with the scheme. "Anything to do with Ukrainian nationalism at the present moment was like a red rag to a bull to the Soviet authorities," said Collier. The Ukrainian involvement in the effort "would in itself [have been] enough to damn it from their point of view. In these circumstances I could not hold out any hope that H.M.G. would interest themselves in the scheme in any way."<sup>34</sup>

Ukrainian Canadians were not far behind their fellow Ukrainians in Europe in the effort to draw attention to the famine. In October 1933, the Ukrainian National Council in Canada, which had recently been formed in Winnipeg, addressed a plea for famine relief to Ramsay MacDonald, the prime minister of Great Britain, R.B. Bennett, the prime minister of Canada, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president of the United States.

Citing the thousands of letters that were reaching Canada from Ukraine, the Council pointed out that the systematic starvation of the population was caused not by crop failure, but by Moscow's policy of confiscating the farmers' grain, and begged MacDonald, Bennett and Roosevelt "to arrange for an immediate neutral investigation of the famine situation in Ukraine, with a view to organizing international relief."



Similar appeals were sent to Ottawa and London by Ukrainians in other Canadian cities. Ukrainians who held a meeting in Oshawa, Ontario, in October 1933, for example, voiced their "strongest protest against the Soviet Government, which by its policy of ruthless grain collections from the starving population of Ukraine aggravates and prolongs the conditions of famine and starvation . . . and appeal to the opinion of the civilized world in the hope that it will force the Soviet Government to cease this inhuman policy."

The same Foreign Office officials who had been receiving weekly and daily dispatches about the famine and who had agreed again and again that a famine of unprecedented proportions was devastating Ukraine now began referring to an "alleged famine" and instructed the British High Commissioner in Ottawa to brush away these appeals by writing: "His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom cannot undertake any action with a view to investigating conditions in territories under the control of the Soviet Government, or to organizing relief for the inhabitants, in the absence of any indication that such action would be acceptable to the Soviet Government." In February 1934, many months after the worst of the famine was over, the British High Commissioner replied to the Ukrainian National Council, repeating almost word for word the text drafted in London.<sup>35</sup>

Not satisfied with refusing to mount relief efforts, the British government also actively discouraged private initiatives to help the famine victims. In August 1933, L.B. Golden, the General Secretary of the Save the Children Fund, turned to the Foreign Office for advice. The Fund had been receiving reports about the famine both from the press and from private letters. Yet the Soviet Embassy in London had assured the Fund that the harvest was a "bumper one." Should the Fund issue an appeal for relief funds? Golden asked Whitehall.

The Foreign Office urged the Fund to remain silent. As a senior official put it in a confidential memo, "the line to take is that, while information available here tends to confirm that famine conditions exist in some parts of Russia, there can be no question of issuing an appeal unless and until the Soviet authorities admit that conditions merit such assistance."<sup>36</sup> No such Soviet admission ever came, of course, and the Save the Children Fund publicly remained as blind to the famine as the British government.

Whitehall revealed its real reason for refusing to sanction relief efforts in December 1933, when the Federation of Jewish Relief Organizations, the Society of Friends and the Save the Children Fund proposed to establish a joint relief committee. To be known as the "United British Appeal," the committee would raise money to purchase food for the starving, "irrespective of nationality or creed," through Torgsin,

the Soviet shops in which food was always available, even at the height of the famine, to those who could pay with hard currency or gold. Forwarding its draft constitution to the Foreign Office, the committee wrote that it proposed to co-operate with the Ukrainian Bureau in London and asked to be informed about Whitehall's opinion of the bureau.

The bureau's chief activity, the Foreign Office complained in its reply, was the issue of bulletins in which it protested the treatment of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. In view of the bureau's attitude toward a government with which Britain had "normal relations," the Foreign Office did "not have much to do with it." The United British Appeal was quashed before it had raised a single pound.<sup>37</sup>

In May 1934, Ewald Ammende, the secretary general of the Interconfessional and International Relief Committee for the Famine Areas in the Soviet Union, set out for Britain, the United States and Canada to obtain support for the committee from governments, churches and humanitarian organizations.<sup>38</sup> On 16 May, Ammende and Fritz Dittloff, the former manager of the German agricultural concession Drusag in the North Caucasus, visited the Foreign Office. Ammende explained that he was in England on a humanitarian mission—to arouse public opinion to the famine so that pressure could be put on the Soviet government either to allow relief to be sent or itself to take measures to alleviate the famine. He had already interviewed various prominent people who had "shown themselves sympathetic but had been anxious to make sure that he was not contemplating a political movement against the Soviet Government." Ammende had assured them that he had no such intention. Indeed, when the Duchess of Atholl (who had arranged the interview at the Foreign Office) had suggested a boycott of Soviet grain, Ammende had rejected the idea because it would introduce political prejudice into the case.

Dittloff, when it was his turn to speak, described the situation in Ukraine and the North Caucasus: the government was deporting villagers to Siberia or was driving them into the wilderness to starve. This "wholesale deportation and expulsion," which was being used not only for economic reasons but also to remove political suspects and clergymen, had reduced the population of the North Caucasus in two years by two million persons. The reduction in the population of Ukraine must have been proportionate.

Ammende then said that he had come to the Foreign Office both to lay the facts before the British government and to determine whether it objected to the campaign that he was undertaking. Whitehall did not presume to encourage or discourage any purely humanitarian movement, Collier replied disingenuously. Being, "rightly or wrongly, in normal relations with the Soviet government," it would not officially

help Ammende. On the other hand, it would not prevent him from conducting public meetings or publishing articles. This was small beer indeed, but Ammende replied graciously that the position was satisfactory to him.

Ammende asked in conclusion whether Britain, as a member of the League of Nations Council, could not make its vote for admission of the Soviet Union to the League "conditional on some assurances on matters of humanitarian concern, such as famine relief." Collier deftly brushed the question away. It had no actuality at present, he explained. If a member of the Council did propose to admit the Soviet Union, it would probably be France, and the question should therefore be addressed to the French Foreign Office. Ammende replied diplomatically that this was the answer that he had expected, and he and Dittloff took their leave, "apparently much relieved that no obstacles were to be placed in the way of their campaign."

Collier was not being entirely straightforward when he assured Ammende of the British government's neutrality on the question of a public relief campaign. The day before his meeting with Ammende, Collier had had a visit from Mrs. Christie, the treasurer of the Russian Assistance Fund, as the reconstituted United British Appeal was now known. Mrs. Christie explained that she had been collecting money to send parcels through Torgsin to people in Ukraine whose names were known to the fund. Now Ammende and other persons who were interested not only in famine relief but also in "propaganda to enlighten world opinion of the true conditions in the Soviet Union" were urging her to join with them in a series of public meetings to stir the public. Mrs. Christie felt uneasy in her conscience when she saw how little the average person realized the true state of affairs and had come to ask Collier's advice on what she should say to Ammende. Collier made it clear that she would do best to shun publicity. "I told Mrs. Christie," he minuted later,

... that as a Government official I had no *locus standi* for giving her advice on such a subject, and that in any case the Foreign Office, being a Department of a Government which was, rightly or wrongly, in normal relations with the Soviet Government, could not give any official encouragement to propaganda directed against that Government's actions. What I could and would do, however, as a private person, was to put the position before her as I saw it and let her decide for herself. It seemed to me that her course of action depended upon which of two alternative objects she wished to aim at—either to relieve individual suffering or to arouse public opinion here to a realization of the general conditions which had produced that suffering—for in present circumstances the two objects

were unfortunately incompatible. As far as I could see, there was no likelihood that any amount of agitation in this country would alter the present agricultural policy of the Soviet Government which had brought about these famine conditions, while there was every likelihood that such agitation would cause the Soviet Government to interfere with her present relief work.<sup>39</sup>

Whitehall practiced a similar policy of seeming impartiality when the question of the famine was brought up in Parliament. In July 1934, drawing on information provided by Malcolm Muggeridge and Ewald Ammende, Lord Charnwood gave notice that he would be asking a question about the famine in the House of Lords. According to information circulated in England, he wrote, the systematic policy of the Soviet government had caused widespread starvation among the population of the grain-producing areas. Did the British government have information to confute this allegation? The reply that the Foreign Office prepared for the government's use in Parliament was characteristically opaque:

1. It is not His Majesty's Government's business to enter into controversy on the subject of the internal affairs of foreign countries; their information is not collected for this purpose and there are, therefore, no papers suitable for laying which bear on Lord Charnwood's arguments on the subject of living conditions and food supplies in the Soviet Union.
2. His Majesty's Government are familiar with the information published about food supplies and conditions in the agricultural districts of the Soviet Union which have doubtless given rise to Lord Charnwood's question. . . . His Majesty's Government have no material for contradicting this information except what has been published through Soviet official sources which is generally available and upon which people can form their own opinions.
3. If it is unavoidable to enter into the substance of Lord Charnwood's allegations, it might be pointed out that apart from facts, Lord Charnwood has made judgments of cause and effect. His Majesty's Government have reasons to defend Soviet economic policy, which, as a policy of control and planning, is presumably more responsible than any other Government's policy for conditions in the country in which it is practiced, whatever people's judgments of those conditions may be. But there is no information to support Lord Charnwood's apparent suggestion that the Soviet Government have pursued a policy of deliberate impoverishment of agricultural districts of their country, whether or not

their policy is considered to have had that effect.

4. The diversion of supplies from the countryside for whatever purpose naturally leaves less available for the producers, but His Majesty's Government have no information to bear out the arguments of Lord Charnwood in which he emphasised the effect of particular measures in this respect.<sup>40</sup>

In a covering note, the author of these meticulously worded generalizations, equivocations and evasions explained that Charnwood's motion put the government in the position of "either defending the internal policy of the Soviet Government, which we have no reason for doing, or making unfavourable statements about conditions in the Soviet Union, which are also open to objection, however richly they are deserved." It was true, the writer conceded, that Soviet policy had had a "deplorable effect on conditions in the agricultural part of the Soviet Union by dislocating the former system of production" and that grain had been exported when starvation existed in the grain-producing areas. Nevertheless, he concluded, it was preferable "to deal with the facts behind Lord Charnwood's arguments as little as possible."

The subsequent debate in the House of Lords, which took place on 25 July 1934, was inconclusive. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Earl of Denbigh supported Charnwood, but government members tried to block the discussion first on points of parliamentary procedure (the undesirability of discussing the internal affairs of another country), and then on the grounds that those who wanted to talk about the famine in Ukraine were not noticeably eager to examine oppression in Germany or poverty in England. The greatest obstacle, however, was the government's insistence, enunciated by Lord Stanhope, the parliamentary under secretary of state for foreign affairs, that it had no information about the famine beyond what had been published. Little could be gained by sharply questioning Whitehall's foreign policy, and Charnwood quickly withdrew his motion.<sup>41</sup>

The Foreign Office was less reluctant to deal with the facts about the famine when British interests were at stake. At the same time as the parliamentary debate was taking place, a British civil servant in India named C. C. Garbett was writing to Vansittart to complain that Communists were subverting the peasants of the Punjab. Did London have any figures about the famine—how many people had perished, how many homeless children there were, what the cost of food was—that could be used to counter this subversion? In reply, the Foreign Office forwarded ten of the most revealing dispatches that it had received from Moscow, including reports on tours of Ukraine by Walter Duranty and William Henry Chamberlin in the autumn of 1933. Collier explained in



a covering letter that the statistics about the famine that Garbett sought were not readily available:

The Soviet government, of course, do not publish any figures showing how many people have perished by famine, and they put every obstacle in the way of such figures being estimated by other people. . . . I think, however, that the attached copies of Foreign Office print (which are of course highly confidential and should be kept in the safe used for similar confidential papers belonging to the Political Secretariat of the Government of India) may be of some assistance to you—in particular, Lord Chilston's dispatches . . . which throw a lurid light on the "cost of living" question, and Mr. Strang's dispatches . . . in which you will find estimates by two competent journalists of the numbers of people who had died in last year's famine. . . .<sup>42</sup>

Two months later, Garbett thanked Collier for the dispatches, which had supplied exactly the information he had wanted. "Now, thanks to you, I have the facts and greater confidence in our own counter-measures." The documents, Garbett continued, would be treated "with the secrecy you desire. . . . I am not keeping any copy of this letter—merely the reference—and the shorthand notes will be burnt."<sup>43</sup>

The dyspeptic efforts to provide at least a modicum of relief dragged on for another year. In late August 1934, the Duchess of Atholl, the most persistent British lobbyist for the famine victims, forwarded to the Foreign Office a memorandum written by Fritz Dittloff, as well as statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Reverend J. H. Rushbrooke, the general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, and once again raised the question of making British consent to the Soviet Union's entry into the League of Nations conditional on the cessation of food exports and permission of famine relief, particularly since, as the duchess argued, the Soviet government might now be more willing to admit the famine than it had been a year or two ago. Simon's reply to the duchess was polite but firm:

My information does not, I am afraid, confirm the view, which you express in your letter, that the Soviet Government are any more disposed to provide facilities for comprehensive and organised relief work than they have been hitherto. . . .

I fear . . . that it is not possible to relate the question of Soviet candidature for the League with any questions of internal Soviet policy. There is little doubt that any attempt to attach conditions to Soviet membership of the League of Nations, even if it were technically possible, would result in the abandonment by the Soviet government of their candidature

and the consequent sacrifice of the international objects which we believe that Soviet membership would serve, without any advantage being secured.<sup>44</sup>

Much of the information proffered by the various relief groups that were lobbying the Foreign Office was forwarded to the British embassy in Moscow for comment. In September 1934, Lord Chilston, who had replaced Ovey as the British ambassador in 1933, responded to a query about the information received from Ammende and about the efficacy of the Russian Assistance Fund, making it clear that he was in favour of "discouraging any diversion of British charity into Russian channels." The amount of food sent to Ukraine by the Russian Assistance Fund, Chilston pointed out correctly, could not materially alleviate the famine. He then offered the curious argument that there was no famine at all, because in the past six months the U.S.S.R. had exported 472,000 tons of grain, 123,000 tons of which had gone to the United Kingdom, as well as large quantities of butter, eggs, poultry, bacon and fish. Moreover, he claimed, British relief was an affront to the Soviet Union:

I am not confident that all the food parcels reach their destination, and even though it is possible that the Soviet Government may put up with the scheme on account of their need of foreign exchange it is also possible that they may regard it as an insult to their powers of organization and distribution. I am tempted to ask what the organizers of the Charity Fund would say if the U.S.S.R. returned the compliment by sending parcels of food for "the starving poor" in England?

The ambassador's position puzzled the Foreign Office. "Does Lord Chilston really think that there is now no famine, or no prospect of famine, in the Soviet Union because grain is being exported?" Collier minuted. "Certainly we have no illusions here about relief schemes for Russia; but what was interesting in the visits of Dr. Ammende, etc., was not their relief schemes but their information on conditions in the Ukraine, etc. Lord Chilston, however, makes no comment on that—presumably because he has no means of checking it."<sup>45</sup>

In February 1935, Ammende renewed his campaign in England. On 14 February, after a conference in London at which Ammende talked to church organizations about the threat of a new famine and the need to avoid a repetition of the tragedy of 1933, the Reverend J. H. Rushbrooke saw Simon to express his concern about "the spread of famine actual and prospective" in Ukraine. The discussion led to no definite result, and Simon merely promised to ask Chilston for more informa-

tion. "I think it most improbable that a famine on the scale of 1933, or anything like it, is to be expected," Chilston replied to Simon on 20 February.

The 1934 harvest was probably about the same as that of 1933; and grain exports were 16 per cent less than in 1933, in which year they were small enough. . . . As to the reaction of the Soviet Government to any relief, I am still of the opinion . . . that they might regard any offer as an insult to their internal organization. They certainly, in any case, would not facilitate relief.<sup>46</sup>

A month later, when it became known that Anthony Eden, then Lord Privy Seal, would be visiting Moscow to discuss European security, British church organizations again approached the Foreign Office to explain the difficulties that they encountered when they tried to send food and medication to the Soviet Union. The churches had drawn up a list of points for Whitehall to press in its negotiations with Moscow—abolishing custom duties on parcels of food, medication and warm clothing, for example—but Rushbrooke presented the list almost apologetically. He was not requesting action but only seeking information, and he would be grateful if Eden simply mentioned the matter to the British ambassador. Eden took the churches' points with him to Moscow, but did not discuss them there even with the ambassador, let alone the Soviet government.<sup>47</sup> The British relief campaign for Ukraine had petered out.

The American response was no better than the British. When the State Department received the appeal that the Ukrainian National Council had sent to President Roosevelt, it instructed the American consul general in Winnipeg "to inform [the Council] that, as the conditions to which [it] refers do not appear directly to affect American citizens or interests, the Department is not in a position to take any action."<sup>48</sup>

This was not the only appeal that the United States government brushed off.

In the eighteenth century, many Dutch and German Mennonites had settled in southern Ukraine. In the 1920s, some of the Ukrainian Mennonites emigrated to North and South America, but tens of thousands continued to live in the old colonies near the Dnieper and Molochna rivers. In March 1933, the Mennonite Central Committee in Hillsboro, Kansas, wrote to Cordell Hull, the secretary of state, in behalf of their co-religionists: "We receive thousands of letters pleading in the most pitiable manner for bread. According to testimonies verified by thousands of letters, the people are dying in large numbers for want of food."

“Although the Department appreciates the anxiety of American citizens whose relatives in Russia are suffering from lack of food,” the State Department replied to the Mennonites, “it is of the opinion that there are no measures which this Government may appropriately take at the present time in order to facilitate relief work being carried on in Russia.”<sup>49</sup>

Still another plea was addressed to President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull by the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America in November 1933. Enclosing a memo in which they cited the available evidence about the famine and pointed out that it was caused not by poor crops or drought, but by Moscow’s exploitation of Ukraine, the Ukrainian women begged the American government “to prevail upon the American Red Cross to establish a Red Cross base in Ukraine which shall serve as a medium of help sent by the Ukrainians and other peoples throughout the world.”

Again, the State Department replied that “there does not appear to be any measure which this Government can appropriately take at the present time in this matter.”<sup>50</sup>

And in December 1933, Rabbi Manuel Laderman of Denver, Colorado, telegraphed a plea to the White House:

“ASSOCIATED PRESS DISPATCH DECEMBER SEVENTEENTH VIENNA REPORTS CARDINAL INNITZER HEADS MOVEMENT TO SHIP SURPLUS WHEAT OTHER FOOD-STUFFS TO FAMINE CENTERS UKRAINE AND NORTH CAUCASUS TO SAVE MILLIONS LIVES STOP I KNOW OF MANY LETTERS TELLING FRIGHTFUL STARVATION THERE STOP PEOPLE WRITE HIGHEST HOPE IS TO TASTE BREAD AGAIN STOP CANNOT RED CROSS OR OTHER AMERICAN AGENCY DO SOMETHING TO HELP”

Once again, the State Department replied that it could not become involved:

According to the Department’s information, the American Red Cross does not undertake to carry on relief operations abroad except upon the request, or by the consent, of the Government of the country in question; and the Department is not in a position to suggest the name of any other American agency which might be interested in this matter.

It may be added that, since the conditions to which you refer do not appear directly to affect American citizens or interests, this Government is not in a position to take any action in the matter.<sup>51</sup>

Thus the sordid pattern of appeasement and complicity in carnage was set. The victims of the famine in Ukraine were consigned to their slow

and agonizing deaths as surely as the Jews of Europe were delivered to the planners of the Final Solution, when once again democratic governments maintained "normal relations" and co-operated in suppressing news about a genocide.

Fifty years, ago, as the British Foreign Office reasoned, it was "normal relations" that required blindness to mass murder; today, at least as the Soviet Embassy argues, it is the Helsinki Accords that outlaw even mentions of the famine of 1933, let alone demands for a full accounting. *Realpolitik* has not changed. The slaughter of millions of innocents continues to be condoned.

#### NOTES

1. Public Record Office, London, FO. 371/17251 N 5797. (Hereafter cited as FO.) Schiller's report was also published, under the pseudonym "Expert Observer," as "Famine's Return to Russia," *Daily Telegraph*, 25, 28 and 30 August 1933.
2. W. H. Chamberlin, "Soviet Taboos," *Foreign Affairs* 13 (April 1935): 431.
3. "Mulroney address sparks ire of Soviets," *Globe and Mail*, 5 December 1983.
4. *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*. Second series, vol. 7, document 52, p. 73 (4 January 1930).
5. FO.371/16335 N 2081.
6. FO.371/16322 N 3057.
7. FO.371/16335 N 3060.
8. FO.371/16335 N 3280.
9. FO.371/16329 N 3843.
10. FO.371/16329 N 4637.
11. FO.371/16329 N 4888.
12. FO.371/16322 N 5069.
13. FO.371/16322 N 5094.
14. FO.371/17251 N 2922.
15. FO.371/17251 N 3644.
16. FO.371/17251 N 4378.
17. FO.371/17251 N 4694.
18. FO.371/17251 N 5797.
19. FO.371/17251 N 5514.
20. FO.371/17251 N 5874.
21. FO.371/17251 N 6572.
22. FO.371/17257 N 6873.



23. FO.371/17253 N 7753.
24. National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 59, Decimal File, 1910-44. 861.48/2450. (Hereafter cited as NA.) The emphasis has been added. I am grateful to the Kennan Institute in Washington, D.C. for its help in obtaining the United States documents cited here.
25. NA.861.48/2451.
26. NA.861.48/2478.
27. FO.371/16329 N 3843.
28. FO.371/17253 N 6415.
29. FO.371/17251 N 6401.
30. Quoted in W. H. Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age* (Boston 1934), 369.
31. FO.371/17247 N 7217.
32. In September 1933 Ukrainian farmers in Western Canada offered to donate part of their harvest to their compatriots through the Canadian Red Cross. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR again refused relief, arguing that "the carrying out of the Canadian citizens' proposals is not necessary in the absence of real need." "Dokument z 'Ukrainskoho holosu' za 13.IX.1933," *Ukrainskyi holos*, 21 March 1973.
33. FO.371/17247 N 7265.
34. FO.371/17247 N 7748.
35. FO.371/17247 N 7878.
36. FO.371/17251 N 6401.
37. FO.371/17247 N 8652.
38. In *Muss Russland sterben?*, published in Vienna in 1935 and then translated as *Human Life in Russia* (London 1936), Ammende summarized the information about the famine that he had gathered as the secretary of the committee. The book went virtually unrecognized. Its message that the Soviet government was systematically exploiting famine in order to destroy certain categories of people simply could not penetrate either the indifference that is the usual response to news of a catastrophe in a remote and benighted corner of the world or the good will that Stalin was enjoying among intellectuals. The few reviews that did appear were respectful but sceptical, and the book almost immediately passed from public view (with help, it is said, from the Soviet embassy in London, which bought up all the copies in the bookshops and then pressured the publisher to prevent a reprint). The book was reissued in 1984 by John T. Zubal, Inc., in Cleveland, and the foundation to Commemorate the 1933 Ukrainian Famine in Montreal.
39. FO.371/18320 N 2988 and N 2997.
40. FO.371/18321 N 4410. If this anaesthetic verbiage is read carefully, it becomes clear that the Foreign Office was actually disclaiming the possession of information bearing on the contention that the famine conditions

were created by the Soviet government, and not of information about the existence of the famine.

41. *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), 5th ser., vol. 93 (1934), cols. 1097–1117.
42. FO.371/18330 N 3789.
43. FO.371/18330 N 3789 and N 5132.
44. FO.371/18321 N 5006.
45. FO.371/18321 N 5341.
46. FO.371/19467 N 777 and N 1051.
47. FO.371/19467 N 1256.
48. NA.861.48/2452.
49. NA.861.48/2433.
50. NA.861.48/2454.
51. NA.861.48/2461.

# THE IMPACT OF THE MAN-MADE FAMINE ON THE STRUCTURE OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

*Wsevolod W. Isajiw*

Large demographic changes in any society are bound to make an impact on the social structure of that society. The starvation and death of millions of Ukrainian peasants in 1933 was a sudden demographic change of unprecedented proportions and thus had a long-ranging effect on the social structure of Ukrainian society. Here our purpose is to single out and discuss the nature of the most important structural consequences of the famine.

Before proceeding, however, a brief explanation should be given as to what we mean when we talk of social structure. Social structure refers to groupings of people in their relations with one another. These groupings can be large community-like collectivities or relatively small organized units; they can be either well organized or little organized. Their relation to each other can be either vertical or horizontal, i.e., some may be subordinate to others, or they may be in the same or similar position to one another. Furthermore, their relations with each other can be either one of co-operation or conflict, of co-ordination of activities or isolation from each other. Their activities can be highly centralized, making them highly dependent upon one another, or decentralized, allowing them to be relatively independent of one another. Specifically, we will refer to such groupings as peasants and urban dwellers, elites and their social bases, the intelligentsia, workers, and the like as the elements making up the social structure.

Also, we cannot look at the famine in Ukraine in 1933 as simply a demographic catastrophe. Unlike almost all other famines, this was a historical phenomenon, in the sense that it was a result of conscious actions, consequences of which were foreseen. Thus, it has more in common with such phenomena as wars than with other famines which are natural disasters. In this context, the famine was a tactical means to an end and has to be examined alongside other tactical means undertaken at the time. Hence, in discussing the consequences of the famine, we must also examine the results of other measures taken by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in relation to Ukrainian society since the famine was the culmination of a series of policies. The other measures which preceded the famine were dekulakization and collectivization. In some respects the consequences of these measures combined with those of the famine, in others, the famine stood alone as a tragic cause of the empty spaces in the structure of Ukrainian society in years to come.

What then were the consequences of the famine on the Ukrainian social structure? In our view, the main long-ranging consequence was that the famine removed the social base of the Ukrainian elite of the time. By elite we do not mean anything like aristocracy; rather, the term refers to groups of people who are able to exercise power or influence the development of political, social and cultural institutions. These are the groups of people who are an active minority and are able to achieve the goals which they articulate by mobilizing the passive majority. The social base, on the one hand, is the larger community-like collectivity whom the elite purports to represent and which at least potentially legitimizes the power of the elite. It is the community or the community-type collectivity from which the members of the elite are recruited.

The 1920s represent a very rapid development of a new elite in the Soviet Ukraine. This was the intelligentsia, which was committed to the development of Ukrainian institutions, independent of Russian control yet within the structure of the Soviet Russian-dominated society. In the political sphere, these were the groups of people such as Serhii Mazlakh, Vasyl Shakhrai, Iurii Lapchynsky, Vasyl Ellan-Blakytyn, Oleksander Shumsky, Hryhorii Hrynko, Iurii Tiutiunnyk, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Mykhailo Volobuiev, Matvii Iavorsky and Mykola Skrypnyk. Though they represented a number of political formations, such as the Borotbisty, the Bolsheviks, the former Central Rada and the Ukrainian Directory, they were united around the idea of Ukrainization within the context of a socialist structure. In the literary field, of special significance in the Ukrainization process, this elite was represented by well-known writers and poets such as Maksym Rylsky, Pavlo Tychyna, Mykola Zerov, Mykola Bazhan, Valerian Pidmohylny, Mykola Khvylovy, Mykola Kulish, Oleksander Dovzhenko,

Oleh Kandyba, Iurii Klen and Bohdan Antonych. In the field of sciences these were the people grouped around the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.<sup>1</sup> These people constituted the intelligentsia in the East European sense of the word, but were also the key group determining the emerging structure of Ukrainian society. There was one thing which this intelligentsia as a group shared in common, namely, the same social base. Its only social base lay in the Ukrainian peasantry, not only in the sense that the ancestors of most of this intelligentsia were of peasant background, but also in that it counted on the peasantry for political support. The peasants were ultimately the main body of people on whose behalf this intelligentsia acted. The peasants, in turn, expected the intelligentsia to act as their tribune. The socialist ideology of this intelligentsia, never purely Marxist, and in this respect quite distant from Marxism, was basically peasant oriented.

Some social thinkers, such as Viacheslav Lypynsky, saw the weakness of the entire Ukrainian movement even before the revolution in the fact that it was led by the intelligentsia rather than by the elite of the productive classes, that is the landowners and part of the urban classes. While before the Revolution it might have been possible for such an elite to build an independent Ukrainian social structure, toward the end of the 1920s this was a purely academic issue in Soviet Ukraine. Then, for better or worse, the only social class that could undertake the building of an autonomous social structure was the intelligentsia and the peasantry provided the only base for its activities.

Thus, a basic structural consequence of the physical destruction of millions of Ukrainian peasants was the destruction of the social base of the elite of the Ukrainization process. The physical destruction of the elite itself followed shortly. This was hardly an unintended consequence. The Russian Communist Party was quite aware of the role the peasants performed as a base for all Ukrainian movements. Addressing itself to collectivization, the Soviet paper *Proletarska pravda* proclaimed that the aim of collectivization was "to destroy the social basis of Ukrainian nationalism—individual peasant agriculture."<sup>2</sup> Stalin himself linked the nationality question with the peasantry. Dekulakization, which took place a few years before the famine, destroyed the link between the most active layers of the peasantry and the intelligentsia. Collectivization removed any direct control or influence that the increasingly more powerful Ukrainian intelligentsia had over the peasants, and the famine itself undermined the intelligentsia's base for years to come. The impact of these events on the social structure has to be measured in terms of generations. It takes at least a generation of people to congeal into an active elite group from an existing social base, and this only under favourable conditions. But when the base itself is seriously damaged, the



emergence of any new elite can be delayed for two or three or more generations. Because of the famine a new peasant-based elite has yet to emerge or congeal, although the 1960s and 1970s showed some developments in this direction. To what extent a new Ukrainian elite can emerge with a purely urban social base is still an open question.

Another consequence of the famine has to do with the impact of famine or hunger on the power of the ruling authorities. The sociologist P. A. Sorokin has pointed out that throughout history, hunger and famines have functioned very much like wars, in that they called for centralized action by the authorities. He also indicates that cause and effect in this instance can be and often have been interchangeable. Thus, like wars, hunger and famine have been used by ruling authorities as a means of centralizing and increasing their power over their subordinate populations, and especially as means of gaining or maintaining absolute dictatorial power over populations devoid of any rights.<sup>3</sup> Sorokin points out that in the history of Imperial Russia hunger or famines occurred relatively frequently. In the nineteenth century there were some eight crises of hunger in Russia. State intervention became necessary, but it resulted in a continuous accretion of various compulsory regulations which functioned to maintain and increasingly centralize the state's influence over the social structure of Russian society. Thus, for example, the idea of state and collective farms had been tried in Russia a century or so before the Soviet collectivization of peasants. Similarly, all strikes by the people in Petrograd in the Russian Revolution itself were connected with food; the political demands were insignificant.<sup>4</sup> This, however, made it possible for the Bolsheviks to gain and maintain power.

Dekulakization, collectivization and the famine enabled the Russian Communist Party to establish complete, centralized control of Ukrainian villages. It should be remembered, that after the Revolution, especially during the period of the New Economic Policy, villages in Ukraine had relative economic independence. Politically, they tended to support the Ukrainian elements in the Communist Party of Ukraine. All this ceased after the famine. The total impoverishment of the peasant made him docile, isolated from specifically Ukrainian political elements and subordinate to the central policies of the party.

Facilitating the centralization of power in the wake of dekulakization was a factor which became a permanent feature in the structure of Ukrainian society, namely, the *seksoty*. Introduced probably around 1929 into the village and urban communities, *seksoty* were groups of either long-standing or recent residents, who were induced by the Soviet secret police to act as plants or informers. Their original role was to observe and report to the police the conversations and actions of in-

dividuals. This new element in the policy of centralized control followed an earlier attempt to institutionalize control, namely, the establishment of the *komnezamy*, Committees of Poor Peasants. Although the *komnezamy* were abolished after the famine, the *seksoty* remained. Their role, especially during Ezhovshchyna, the Great Purge of 1936–8, was to supply the secret police, the NKVD, with names of individuals to be arrested and deported to forced labour camps. Thus, as W. Girmont has pointed out, in addition to being an instrument of centralized control, *seksoty* developed the economic function of supplying cheap, easily transportable, labour.<sup>5</sup> The social psychological effect of the *seksoty* on the everyday community life has yet to be properly assessed. But there is no doubt that as a means of supervision of the everyday life of the community and of individuals they inhibited normal social interaction.

The famine also disrupted the natural process of migration from the rural to urban areas in Ukraine. In Western Europe throughout the nineteenth century it was normal for the larger cities constantly to increase their populations through in-migration from rural areas. This migration was inherently related to the processes of industrialization, the growth of commerce and transportation.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the socio-economic structure of Western European society became dependent on the continuous development of these processes.

In Eastern Ukraine, the development of urbanization in the first two decades of the twentieth century was rather irregular and relatively slow. Thus, in 1897 only 16.5 per cent of the population inhabited urban centres and by 1926, almost 30 years later, the figure had increased only to 19.3 percent. Much of this gain appears to have occurred in the 1920s when migration from rural to urban areas in Ukraine increased significantly, perhaps reaching what could be considered to be a normal pattern.<sup>7</sup> In the early 1920s writers such as Moisei Ravich-Cherkasky predicted that as industry developed, millions of Ukrainian peasants would rapidly fill the ranks of the urban proletariat. In 1927–8 the rate of urban population growth in the Ukraine was 41 per 1000 inhabitants of Ukraine, in 1929–30, 96.8 per 1000.<sup>8</sup> After 1933, however, this process of Ukrainian rural-urban migration stopped for a long period of time. The effects of the famine in this regard were twofold: on the one hand, there was little rural population left to migrate to the cities; on the other, what urban population increase did occur was the result of in-migration from Russia, rather than from Ukrainian villages. Thus statistics show that while from 1926 to 1939 the total population of Ukraine increased by 12 per cent, Ukrainians increased by less than 2 per cent, whereas Russians in Ukraine increased by 57 per cent.<sup>9</sup> The Russian increase was focused largely in the cities.

Furthermore, after the famine, centralized control over the now collectivized villages worked to isolate the villages from the cities. This destroyed something which was very important in the rural development of Western countries, namely, the symbiotic relationship between the village and the city. Notwithstanding the problems related to industrial expansion and rural-urban migration of labour, the village and the city in Western Europe developed a trading relationship. The village supplied directly regional urban centres with food products, and the city, in return, met the villages' needs for manufactured goods. This type of trading relationship created regional subcultures and transformed the peasant into a farmer. As a result, in the Western world, with few exceptions, the peasant—in the Eastern European sense of the word—ceased to exist some two hundred years ago.

In Ukraine collectivization and famine prevented the village and the city from developing a close relationship. In general, in the history of Imperial Russia this process was little developed. The villages supported the cities less through imposed direct trading as much as through the imposition of grain quotas. As Sorokin put it, the practice of the cities raiding villages for grain was not uncommon.<sup>10</sup> But the centralization of agriculture following the famine made it actually impossible for the villages to develop through trade with nearby cities. The village was thus isolated from the city and the peasant became an anomaly. Instead of moving into the role of the farmer, as in the West, he has moved at best into the role of hired farm labourer which is neither that of a farmer nor that of an industrial worker. The low prestige accorded the peasant by the urban people has made his position in the structure of society even more ambiguous. The persistent failure of Soviet agriculture as an element of the economy until today can thus be said to be one of the results of the famine.

The last consequence to be discussed here is social psychological in nature. Normally, the social structure of any social system develops and changes in relation to increased levels of self-consciousness of its members. This includes both a future and a past direction of consciousness. That is, it involves shared aspirations and expectations in regard to the future and shared awareness and articulation of knowledge about the common past. In normal societies, cataclysmic events and especially man-made calamities in the life of society, usually become subjects of special awareness and cultural articulation. Scholarly analyses of these events are undertaken, books are written about them, religious services are held for the victims—in short, attempts are made to find the meaning of these calamities, so that ways can be found to avoid them in the future. The famine in Ukraine was followed by continued attempts at official cover-up. No cultural articulation of it has been un-

dertaken, or permitted, and even today it is dangerous for the citizens to talk about it. Thus, the level of awareness of it as part of the historical past of the society is low. Yet, in the people's collective memory there is a degree of knowledge about the famine. As one observer recently arrived from Ukraine reported, in 1964, immediately after Brezhnev and Kosygin came to power, for a few weeks there were no bread deliveries to local stores. All of a sudden people started saying: "are they going to try another 1933 on us?"<sup>11</sup> Thus the knowledge of the famine and its horrors remains in the subconsciousness of the population and seems to be transmitted to consecutive generations.

Yet, the lack of articulation of this knowledge results in ambiguous attitudes toward the society's past. This has structural consequences. For one thing, the subconscious fear instilled in the population by the famine and uncertainty about the society's past function to produce and maintain insecure identities. The development and persistence of any *stable* indigenous social structure is predicated upon secure identities of the society's members. Secondly, cultural, social and political creativity can develop only if individuals have an opportunity to reflect upon and articulate their knowledge of their own community's experiences. Hence, no definite elite—in the sense discussed above—can congeal and develop in society if its awareness of its society's past is low or ambiguous. Hence, even years after the famine, the continued efforts at cover-up inhibits, along with other factors, the development of an indigenous social structure.

To conclude, the consequences of the man-made famine upon the structure of Ukrainian society have been wide-ranging and far-reaching.

## NOTES

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2. Mace, "The Man-made Famine."

3. P. A. Sorokin, *Hunger as a Factor in Human Affairs*, (Gainsville, FA. 1975), 221.
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5. W. Girmont, "The Economic Function of Terror," *Socialist Newsletter*, no. 6 (1949): 117–18. D. Solovy, *Golgotha of Ukraine*, Part 1 (New York 1953), 244–50. On the roots of the *seksoty* system in the structure of the secret police, see A. Kalme, *Total Terror, An Exposé of Genocide in the Baltics* (New York 1975), 26–32.
6. A. F. Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (New York 1899) (reprinted 1963), 40–122.
7. *Ukraine, A Concise Encyclopaedia*, 1: 201.
8. Ibid.; M. Ravich-Cherkassky, cited by Mace, "The Man-Made Famine."
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## THE FAMINE OF 1921–1923: A MODEL FOR 1932–1933?

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In the summer of 1921 a famine broke out over wide areas in the Soviet republics of Russia and Ukraine, encompassing the Volga basin, northern Caucasus and the northern shore of the Black Sea.<sup>1</sup> It lasted almost two years, and was brought under control with the help of generous relief programmes organized abroad and of good harvests at home. The famine of 1921–3 was the first of three suffered by Ukraine from the time it came under Soviet rule; the other two were the great genocide of 1932–3 and the lesser and virtually unknown famine of 1946–7.

In Western and Soviet writings, the first (1921–3) Soviet Ukrainian famine is treated simply as a part of a wider “Russian” famine.<sup>2</sup> On closer examination, however, it becomes evident that even though the disaster occurred simultaneously in Russia and Ukraine, its causes, evolution and handling by the Soviet authorities were quite different in each country.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the first Ukrainian famine had less in common with the contemporaneous Russian disaster than with the wholesale starvation of the Ukrainian nation a decade later. However, unlike Stalin’s famine, which was hidden from the outside world, and whose very existence was denied by the Soviet regime, the tragedy that took place under Lenin’s leadership was widely publicized. This famine also left behind an extensive documentation consisting of eyewitness ac-

counts, press reports, statistical data and a variety of other items of private and government origin.<sup>4</sup>

Sixty years after the tragic events, in spite of the wealth of readily accessible primary sources, there is still no comprehensive study of the 1921–3 famine, either for the whole Soviet area, or for the individual republics of Russia and Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> There is, however, an extensive literature which covers various aspects of the question. This article will also be limited in scope: it will examine the reasons for the food shortages in Russia and Ukraine, and the respective measures taken by the Soviet authorities to combat the problem in each country.

### *The Origin of the Famine*

Seven long years of warfare, beginning with the First World War and ending with the various armed struggles commonly referred to as the "Russian Civil War,"<sup>6</sup> undermined the economies of the tsarist empire and its successor states. The economic policies introduced by the Bolsheviks after the revolution, and especially the draconian measures taken under the so-called War Communism, only worsened the situation.

With the help of the Committees of Poor Peasants or *komnezamy* (in Ukrainian),<sup>7</sup> the Bolsheviks confiscated the large private estates and then either turned them over to the peasants for parcelling out among the village poor or converted them into state farms. Peasants were encouraged to join collective farms. Christian Rakovsky, head of the Ukrainian Soviet government, admitted at the Eighth Conference of the Russian Communist Party in December 1919, that the establishment of state and collective farms was motivated by the need "to take the maximum amount of grain from [the peasantry]."<sup>8</sup> The state was responsible for feeding industrial workers, a rapidly expanding bureaucracy and the growing Red Army, but it had little more than worthless banknotes to offer reluctant peasants in exchange for their products. The state, therefore, resorted to forcible requisitioning (*prodrazverstka* in Russian). The Committees of Poor Peasants helped with the requisitioning and were rewarded with a portion of the spoils.<sup>9</sup>

Peasants opposed Bolshevik economic policies with armed resistance and economic boycott. Peasant revolts engulfed the countryside from the Tambov province in central Russia to the Kherson region in southern Ukraine, and were ruthlessly suppressed by Bolshevik armies.<sup>10</sup> More difficult to crush was the economic sabotage of peasants whereby they reduced the cultivated area to the size necessary to cover their own needs. They did this in the mistaken belief that the government would

not dare to confiscate more than the peasants' real surplus. As a result of this tactic, the total sown area for all of the European part of the Soviet republics declined in 1920 to below 70 per cent of the prewar level, and in Ukraine it dropped to below 80 per cent.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when several regions were hit by drought. These factors combined to reduce the 1920 harvest to 50 per cent of the prewar level for the whole Soviet territory, and to 30 per cent in Ukraine.<sup>12</sup> After the first disastrous harvest Ukraine was spared starvation because it had reserves from previous years; Russian regions which lacked such reserves experienced famine conditions as early as 1920.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the disastrous economic situation, and the adverse climatic conditions, both of which were common to Russia and Ukraine, Ukraine had the added burden of living up to its reputation of "the breadbasket of Europe." The "bread basket" vision of Ukraine underlined Germany's short-lived alliance-turned-occupation of 1918; it also characterized the attitude of Lenin and his government toward Ukraine ever since the Bolsheviks came to power in Petrograd in 1917. Two months after the October Revolution, Karl Radek, a Bolshevik leader, harangued Russian workers with the slogan: "If you want food, cry, 'Death to the Rada'."<sup>14</sup> Similarly in 1917 Lenin told V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko and G. K. Ordzhonikidze, commanders of the Russian forces invading Ukraine, that their mission was to obtain "*bread, bread, bread*. Otherwise Piter [Petrograd] will perish."<sup>15</sup> The following year Lenin reminded his followers that, "in Ukraine there is an enormous amount of surplus grain," and that the Bolsheviks had only to go and get it.<sup>16</sup> Ukrainian grain was one of the reasons why the Bolsheviks would not accept Ukrainian secession from Russia. When Ukraine was reconquered by the Russian Red Army in 1919, Lenin could not hold back his satisfaction: "Now we can get enough grain."<sup>17</sup>

There was grain in Ukraine but it was in the hands of the peasants. Lenin believed that it had to be extracted with the help of "an efficient system" and through "strength of arms."<sup>18</sup> The Committees of Poor Peasants (*komnezamy*) were to be a privileged agent of the transfer of grain from the peasants to the state. This role explains the retention of the *komnezamy* in Ukraine long after they had disappeared in Russia.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet Ukrainian government, however, even with the help of the *komnezamy* was unable to implement the requisition policies imposed on it by the Russian leadership because it lacked even the limited support enjoyed by its counterpart in Russia. Aware of the weakness of the Bolshevik regime in Ukraine, Lenin concluded that "the Bolsheviks in the north [i.e., Russia] must assist their comrades in Ukraine in their work of requisition."<sup>20</sup> Russian cadres were sent to Ukraine to expedite

the collection and shipment of Ukrainian grain to Russia.

In spite of the fact that until the creation of the USSR in December 1922, the Ukrainian SSR was still officially a sovereign independent state, Lenin never bothered to establish equitable trade arrangements between Russia and Ukraine. Ukrainian products were simply confiscated and sent to Russia, and this policy was backed by military force whenever necessary. Russian colonialism had survived the revolution. Rakovsky acknowledged this fact, albeit in euphemistic terms at the Eighth Conference of the Russian Communist Party when he stated, "We came to Ukraine when Soviet Russia was experiencing the worst food situation. We approached Ukraine from the point of view that we must use Ukraine to a maximum in order to relieve the food shortage in Russia."<sup>21</sup> Another speaker confirmed at the congress that by taking "a great amount of grain out of Ukraine to Russia" in an unjust and arbitrary manner, the state "provoked anti-Soviet feeling among the peasants."<sup>22</sup>

Decline in the economy, chaos in food distribution and open peasant revolts forced the Soviet government to change its agricultural policies. By 1921 military success allowed the Bolsheviks to consolidate their rule over most of the territory of the former Russian Empire and enabled them to grant economic concessions to the peasantry without undue risk to the Bolsheviks' own political stability. War Communism gave way to the New Economic Policy (NEP) and requisitions were gradually replaced by tax in kind (*prodna-log* in Russian). But NEP, introduced at the beginning of 1921 in Russia and toward the end of the same year in Ukraine, came too late to affect that year's agricultural production. Some peasants did sow more land, but overall, the amount of land under cultivation actually decreased, with most of the decline occurring in the most fertile regions.<sup>23</sup> As the area of cultivated land shrank, so did the prospects for a good harvest. With the unprecedented drought the prospect of famine loomed large.

Ever since the Bolsheviks took power, famine had been a constant threat to the shaky regime. Early Soviet newspapers were replete with threats of famine, reports of starvation and exhortations to struggle against the famine. In June 1920, the nominal head of the Ukrainian state, H. I. Petrovsky, addressed the workers of Ukraine with the following message:

The horrible ghost of famine has appeared over Russia and Ukraine. The workers of Petrograd are starving; Moscow is starving; the bony hand of famine is knocking at [the gates of] workers' centres in Ukraine. At the front, the Red Army is beginning to feel the lack of food. In Ukraine, . . . where at this very moment there are large food reserves, the workers in

the cities are subjected to starvation just as much as the workers of the infertile, hungry north.<sup>24</sup>

Until the spring of 1921, the actual or anticipated victims of food shortages were mostly city dwellers.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the Bolsheviks accused the peasants of greed and selfishness and held them responsible for the starvation of the urban population.

Blaming peasants alone for food shortages ceased to make sense when in May 1921 the Soviet authorities became aware of the unusually hot and dry spell in the rich agricultural regions. In early August 1921 reports from Simbirsk, Saratov and Samara noted the stunted growth of grain plants,<sup>26</sup> and on 26 June an editorial in the party's official organ, *Pravda*, admitted that the country was facing a famine of gigantic proportions.<sup>27</sup> This time the famine engulfed the grain-producing regions rather than urban areas and its victims were peasants as opposed to workers.

Drought, crop failures and famine in the Soviet Union became widely known around the world. In Geneva, Dr. G. Lodyginsky, representative of the émigré Russian Red Cross, prepared a detailed map on crop failures in the Soviet Union as of 1 July 1921.<sup>28</sup> Beginning north of Viatka and Perm, the disaster zone followed the Volga basin beyond Stavropol in the northern Caucasus, and then jutted out toward the north-west to encompass parts of southern Ukraine (Zaporizhzhia, Katerynoslav, and parts of Mykolaiv). A similar map was published by the *Times* of London on 5 August 1921. The American Relief Administration printed a "Hunger Map of Europe, August 1921," in the September issue of its *Bulletin*.<sup>29</sup> This map was less precise than the other two, but it did indicate a very large area of south-eastern Ukraine as famine-stricken. The significance of these maps for our study is that they show that the West was not only aware of the famine in the Soviet Union, but that it also had a fairly good idea of its location, which included a large part of Ukraine.

Since the West knew of the crop failure in Ukraine, it would have been inconceivable for either Moscow or Kharkiv (Soviet Ukraine's capital until 1934) not to be aware of the tragedy. In fact, the Soviet authorities knew more about the disastrous conditions in Ukraine than they cared to admit to the outside world. After all, Lodyginsky's map was based on Soviet sources, and in the accompanying article the author mentioned Katerynoslav by name as part of the famine zone.<sup>30</sup> Thus, there is no basis for the claim made by a recent student of the American relief to Russia that Lenin "was ignorant of conditions" in Ukraine and that "the nominally independent government of the Ukrainian Republic seemed unaware that the famine had spread into its own territory."<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, Lenin's pleas of 2 August 1921, to



the grain-growers of Ukraine on behalf of the starving masses of the Volga, betrays his familiarity with the catastrophic conditions in the steppes of Ukraine. Why else would he single out Right-Bank Ukraine for its "excellent harvest" and omit mention of the steppe regions of Ukraine?<sup>32</sup> Three days later, new directives to speed up grain collection in Ukraine were sent from Moscow and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine scurried to implement the orders. Party workers sent to examine food supply conditions in Ukraine provided yet another occasion for the Kharkiv authorities to gain first-hand knowledge of the growing disaster in their republic.<sup>33</sup>

Lenin was surely as informed as the 14 August 1921 *Pravda* article on grain procurement in Ukraine which pointed out that while five of the twelve provinces (Volhynia, Podillia, Chernihiv, Kiev and Poltava) had bumper crops, elsewhere in Ukraine, the situation was far from satisfactory. Thus *Pravda* reported, "It is necessary to admit that the Don, Katerynoslav and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, most of the raions of the Kremenchuk and Mykolaiv oblasts, and three raions of the Kharkiv oblast (Kharkiv, Izium, Kupliansk) have had unsatisfactory crops. Thirteen raions in these provinces have suffered crop failure." The article concluded that these raions would have to receive food relief if the population was to survive. Therefore, there is no doubt that as early as August 1921 southern Ukraine was on the verge of starvation and that both the Soviet and Western authorities were informed of this fact.

In 1921 the population of the Ukrainian SSR was approximately 26 million and over 80 per cent of its inhabitants lived in the countryside.<sup>34</sup> Wheat and other grains constituted the staple diet of Ukrainians. A contemporary Soviet scholar has estimated that the average Ukrainian consumed some 17.6 puds of grain on an annual basis (one pud equals 16.3 kilogrammes).<sup>35</sup> Every year Ukraine needed about 450 million puds of grain to feed its population, another 100 million for seed and an equal amount for cattle feed—for a total of 650 million puds.<sup>36</sup> In a normal year Ukraine could grow over a billion puds; but in 1921 it managed to harvest only 277 million.<sup>37</sup> Thus, that year Ukraine needed an additional 400 million puds just to cover its own normal needs.

In spite of the fact that Ukraine suffered two catastrophic harvests in a row (it reaped only 300 million puds of grain in 1920), it could still have surmounted the 1921 crisis with the reserves from the pre-1920 years. Neither the Germans in 1918, nor the Russians before 1920 had the wherewithal to be very thorough in their confiscations. Furthermore, since wars prevented grain from being exported abroad, and the breakdown of the consumer industry reduced the demand from the urban centres, there was no market pressure on the village reserves. As a

result, Ukraine had amassed considerable stocks of grain to cover the two deficit years. Dr. L. Hutchinson, who visited Ukraine in December 1921 and January 1922 on behalf of the American Relief Administration, concluded from data supplied to him by various levels of the Soviet administration, as well as on the basis of his own observations, that Ukraine was able to meet its own needs that year and still show a surplus of 93 million puds.<sup>38</sup> Hutchinson's reading of the situation was somewhat over-optimistic because he did not know how bad was the 1920 harvest. Nevertheless, the fact remains that there was no natural cause for famine in Ukraine in 1921–2. As A. Golder, Hutchinson's colleague and companion in Ukraine, wrote in his travel notes, "taking Ukraine as a whole there is enough food to feed every person in that republic under normal conditions."<sup>39</sup> The problem, as Golder realized, was that "normal conditions do not prevail." The anomaly which the Americans could not comprehend was the failure of the Soviet Ukrainian government to redistribute Ukrainian food reserves among the starving population of Ukraine.

Although there was enough grain in Ukraine to feed its entire population, the supplies were not distributed evenly throughout the country. The northern provinces had been spared by the droughts of 1920 and 1921 and had good crops; they had also been less heavily taxed than the southern regions. The rich southern steppelands—the traditional producer of commercial grain—suffered a double setback. In the past two years they had borne more than their share of grain requisitions, and the amount of land being cultivated there had contracted in greater proportion than that in the north. By 1921 the reserves in the south had been depleted, and when the disastrous harvest gave that year only 10 per cent of the normal yield, the peasants of the Soviet Ukrainian steppes were left with enough food for only a few months.<sup>40</sup> In the summer of 1921 the situation in Ukraine was ominous, but the solution was not beyond reach. To prevent a major catastrophe it was sufficient to organize a transfer of food from the northern provinces to the southern. Any normal national government would have done just that; the Soviet Ukrainian government was forced by Moscow to do otherwise.

Moscow's hard line on the question of Ukrainian grain procurement was not motivated by economic factors alone; it was closely bound up with the Bolsheviks' political objectives. By 1921, the Red Army had expelled the Polish army of Pilsudski and the White Russian forces of Denikin and Wrangel from Ukraine, and had driven the Ukrainian national government of Petliura into exile in Poland. But Ukraine had not been pacified. Makhno's anarchist army of 15,000 men controlled large areas of central and southern Ukraine until August 1921. In addition, as Soviet military records show, there were at least 464 other

armed groups of various strength operating in Ukraine in 1921. Soviet literature refers to these groups simply as "bandits," but they were hardly bandits in the conventional sense of the term. Some were anarchists, others supported the Ukrainian national government of Petliura, all opposed the economic exploitation of Ukraine by the Bolshevik regime. At the height of their activity in May-June 1921, the rebels, not including Makhno's forces, numbered over 10,000 men under arms and they controlled large tracts of territory in all parts of Ukraine.<sup>41</sup> In October of the same year, an expeditionary force of 1,500 regular soldiers was dispatched by the Ukrainian government-in-exile. It crossed the western border of Soviet Ukraine in three places and for a month tried to arouse a mass uprising in Right-Bank Ukraine. Eventually the Soviet forces destroyed most of this small army, while the remnants were forced to retreat to Poland.<sup>42</sup>

Turmoil in Ukraine throughout 1921 forced the Bolsheviks to keep the country under martial law for most of the year, and to govern it by means of "revolutionary committees" (*revkomy*) rather than the more conventional Soviet administration. R. P. Eideman, deputy military commander of Ukraine, explained that, "In these bandit regions, we have a *de facto* absence of [Soviet] rule. *Revkomy* and Soviets exist only nominally and actually submit to the influence of one otaman or another, or to the whole underground organization; the population does not fulfil any state obligation."<sup>43</sup> To destroy these rebels, as James Mace notes, "all available forces were pressed into service against them—the Red Army, Cheka, worker-peasant militias, Special Assignment Sections of the party and Komsomol, and the *komnezamy*."<sup>44</sup> The line between the economic "grain front" and the political "bandit front" became blurred: in both cases the ultimate adversary was the peasant. A temporary food crisis in the rebellious countryside, and even a famine, would be a welcome ally for the regime in its effort to crush peasant resistance.

### *Fighting the Famine: the First Year (1921–2)*

The struggle with the famine in Russia proper began in the spring of 1921. On 10 June, the Russian government, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (*VTsIK*), decided to send a commission to the central and lower Volga to study the situation firsthand.<sup>45</sup> A non-partisan "All-Russian Committee for the Relief of the Famine-Stricken" (*VK Pomgol*) and a government-controlled "Central Commission for the Relief of the Famine-Stricken" (*Tsk Pomgol VTsIK*) were formed on 22 June and 19 July respectively.<sup>46</sup> While the govern-

ment had no intention of allowing the latter body to play any significant role in organizing the famine relief within the country, it did count on its members, mostly prominent non-Bolshevik intellectuals, to solicit sympathy from the “bourgeois” West. On 11 July, Patriarch Tikhon, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, sent a plea to the West asking for aid to the starving Russians. The next day, the prominent writer, Maxim Gorky, sent a message “to all honest people,” begging them to save the country of Tolstoi, Dostoevsky and Mussorgsky.<sup>47</sup> The Executive Committee of the Communist International on 30 July appealed to the workers of the world to save “proletarian Russia”; the plea was repeated by Lenin on 2 August and the following day G. V. Chicherin, Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, sent a note to foreign governments outlining the tragic situation in Russia.<sup>48</sup> Custom-tailored to the target audiences, all these requests had one thing in common: they dealt with the famine in Russia—and only Russia. Not a word was spared for the critical situation in Ukraine.

Western response to the Russian appeal was immediate. Gorky’s plea was carried by the Western press on 23 July 1921, and the same day Herbert Hoover, Chairman of the American Relief Administration (ARA), offered American aid. The Soviet government promptly accepted American assistance and a negotiated agreement was signed in Riga on 20 August 1921 by Walter Lyman Brown, European Director of the ARA, and Maxim Litvinov, Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (RSFSR).<sup>49</sup> In the meantime, the International Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies convened an emergency meeting in Geneva for 15–16 August. Among those attending the conference were representatives of twelve national governments and twenty-six national Red Cross organizations. The conference established an International Committee for Russian Relief and appointed Dr. Fridtjof Nansen as its High Commissioner. On 27 August 1921, Nansen signed an agreement with Chicherin in Moscow regarding relief work in Russia.<sup>50</sup> Other relief agencies also sprang up in the West and together with the national Red Cross organizations and various children’s funds sent supplies to Russia. One of the earliest shipments to arrive was an Estonian train of 16 wagons; it unloaded in Moscow on 26 August 1921.<sup>51</sup>

The American vessel *SS Phoenix* docked in Petrograd with the first load of 700 tons of ARA food supplies on 1 September 1921, and a week later the first American kitchen was opened in that city.<sup>52</sup> All the above-mentioned Western actions, just like the Soviet requests, concerned themselves only with the famine in Russia.

In Russia itself one of the earliest measures taken by the Soviet authorities was to declare officially certain areas as famine regions and to can-



cel the collection of all tax in kind in these designated districts. On 21 July eleven regions on the Volga were thus singled out,<sup>53</sup> and other provinces and counties were added to the list in time.<sup>54</sup> In addition, a decree of 4 August 1921 empowered the local authorities to set up special taxation systems to take food from the better off peasants and distribute it among their destitute neighbours. In this way five million puds of food were collected in the officially recognized Russian famine zone and redistributed among the needy population of the same regions.<sup>55</sup>

The prosperous provinces of the Russian republic, together with the other Soviet republics were forced to bring aid to the starving population of the Volga. The famished provinces were twinned with regions considered more fortunate, and the latter were obliged to bring them direct help.<sup>56</sup> All political, trade union and cultural associations organized relief commissions and church treasures were confiscated to buy food for the famished.<sup>57</sup>

By autumn 1921 aid was arriving in the Volga region in increasing quantities. The government sent grain for autumn sowing and the local authorities organized relief for the urban centres. In October 1921, the ARA was feeding 68,598 children and by January 1922, it provided meals for 992,151 children and 7,464 adults. At the height of its operations, in August 1922, the ARA fed 3,194,397 children and 5,342,386 adults daily in the Russian republic alone.<sup>58</sup> Incomplete figures show that the government-controlled *TsK Pomgol*, which remained the sole central agency after the suppression of the non-partisan *VK Pomgol*, raised 10.6 million puds of foodstuffs through various "social organizations."<sup>59</sup> M. I. Kalinin, Chairman of the RSFSR Central Executive Committee, reported that foreign aid, both for seed and consumption, amounted to over 34 million puds of grain in 1921-2 and 80 per cent of this total was furnished by the ARA. In fact, that year, food imports to Russia (financed either by Western or Soviet agencies) surpassed 120 million puds.<sup>60</sup>

In spite of these relief measures, the famine took on gigantic proportions. In Russia alone the area plagued by starvation was inhabited by some 25 million people and 80 per cent of them suffered from more or less acute lack of nourishment.<sup>61</sup> With the disaster taking on such wide proportions, it is not surprising that many people began to flee in May 1921, and in July the authorities organized an evacuation, especially of children. Finding the refugee movement disruptive to the economy, the government put a stop to the organized evacuation at the end of 1921, but many famine victims continued to leave of their own accord. The exact number of refugees is not known, but it was probably well over one million.<sup>62</sup> They went to Siberia, central Russia, and above all to



Ukraine—the traditional Mecca of Russian famine refugees.

While the Volga tragedy was attracting world attention and assistance, nothing was being done to alleviate the situation in Ukraine. Up to the end of 1921 even famine relief raised in Ukraine was sent to Russia.<sup>63</sup> The Kremlin maintained until the end of the year that Ukraine had sufficient grain with which to feed itself and assist Russia. On 18 May 1921 Lenin wrote to M. V. Frunze, military commander of Ukraine and the Crimea: “Comrade Bukharin says that the harvest in the south is splendid. Now the main task of the Soviet state, a task of life and death for us, is to take from Ukraine 200,000,000–300,000,000 puds.”<sup>64</sup> In his notes prepared for the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party at the beginning of July 1921, Lenin quoted Rakovsky to the effect that Ukraine would harvest 550–650 million puds and concluded that out of this amount there should be a surplus of 150 million. “If an army raised in the hungry provinces [of Russia] could be sent to Ukraine,” Lenin added, “that surplus could be collected (tax † barter † personal requisition from the rich for the poor) *in full*.”<sup>65</sup> (Italics in the original.) On 22 July 1921, *Pravda* editorialized that the “complete crop failure in the Volga region is compensated by the beautiful harvest in Ukraine.” Shortly after this, Iu. Larin, a prominent official of Gosplan, the state planning agency, announced in *Pravda* (24 July 1921) that the 1921 Soviet harvest would yield a surplus of 533 million puds of grain, of which 323 million puds were to come from Ukraine. “There is no reason for panic,” concluded Larin, “All we need are energetic means [to collect the surplus].”

It is clear that the central government in Moscow had decided to use Ukrainian grain to feed starving Russia, whatever the cost to the Ukrainian population. To render this policy more acceptable, it exaggerated grain production in Ukraine by stressing the good harvest in the northern and Right-Bank provinces of Ukraine and ignoring the disastrous crop failure in the steppe provinces. Although *Pravda* on 14 August 1921 mentioned starvation in Ukraine it insisted that the Ukrainian harvest represented between 640–700 million puds of grain and therefore Ukraine would be obliged to deliver 117 million puds as its tax in kind (*prodnalog* in Russia) quota for 1921. Significantly, after that *Pravda* article was published, famine, even crop failure, in Ukraine was almost never mentioned as all attention focused on collecting tax in kind from the republic. A. Khalatov, in a 30 August 1921 issue of *Pravda*, insisted that Ukraine must raise 120–150 million puds of grain in taxes and transfer half this total to Russia where it would be used to meet the needs of about 25 per cent of that country’s starving population. Toward the end of November, *Pravda* (27 November 1921) informed its readers that on the basis of incomplete data it appeared that

Ukraine's harvest in 1921 would result in 470 million puds of grain; in a 1 February 1922 article in *Pravda*, Petrovsky continued to use the patently false figure of 400 million puds when referring to Ukraine's grain harvest.

Dr. Hutchinson of the ARA saw through the inflated official figures. In early 1922 he wrote:

The central government in Moscow gives the gross crop of rye, wheat, barley and oats in Ukraine for the crop year 1920–21 at between 700,000,000 and 800,000,000 puds. The Kharkov authorities give about 400,000,000. If the figures given by the local authorities in the four Governments [i.e., provinces] which I did not visit are proportional to those in the eight which I did visit, the total of all local figures would give a crop for the whole Ukraine of about 225,000,000.<sup>66</sup>

As could have been expected, the figures given by the provincial authorities were the most reliable because they were in closer contact with the production units than were officials in the capital. The Ukrainian government in Kharkiv could not have precise data at its disposal since, as Fisher pointed out, "the Kharkiv statisticians had not made first hand investigation because they were Jews, and it was not safe for Jews, particularly Communist Jews, to travel in this country."<sup>67</sup> Moscow, not trusting Kharkiv completely, and having its own economic priorities, conveniently exaggerated the size of Ukraine's harvest.

For Moscow, the Volga famine made a speedy collection of the Ukrainian grain taxes an urgent matter. Although the requisition policy had been abolished in Russia in March 1921, in Ukraine it was maintained until the autumn of that year in order to collect 1920 tax arrears. Originally, Moscow intended to requisition 160 million puds of grain in Ukraine in collecting 1920 taxes. By the end of 1920, the authorities managed to requisition 65 million puds of grain and in March 1921 they reduced the Ukrainian peasantry's 1920 tax debt to 50 million puds,<sup>68</sup> which continued to be collected in Ukraine throughout the famine year of 1921.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Ukraine was assigned its quota of tax in kind (*prodnalog*) for 1921, which represented an exceptionally high figure of 117 million puds of grain. It should be stressed that both taxes, the requisition arrears for 1920 and the tax in kind for 1921, were collected simultaneously during the 1921 famine year.<sup>70</sup> Soon, even Bolshevik officials recognized that drought-stricken Ukraine could not furnish such an exorbitant amount of grain and Ukraine's tax in kind for 1921 was reduced in January 1922 to 68 million puds—an excessive figure in view of the meagre harvest. By February 1922, the Soviet regime, using severe measures, squeezed 69 million puds of tax in kind out of the Ukrainian countryside.<sup>71</sup> Of this total, 38 million puds of

grain remained in Ukraine to feed its urban population and the Red Army, and 31 million puds was sent to Russia.<sup>68</sup> Several months later, the authorities announced that tax in kind in Ukraine for 1921 reached 75.5 million puds, of which 18 million came from the famine-stricken steppe region.<sup>69</sup> Some 30 million puds of grain would have been sufficient to feed two million people for one year—more than the number that died from the famine in Ukraine during this period. Ukraine, itself in the grips of starvation, had over-fulfilled its food tax quota.

In addition to the requisitioning of grain (*prodrazverstka*) and tax in kind (*prodnalog*), Ukraine was subjected to other forms of grain exactions. For instance, the *komnezamy* were obliged to surrender the 18 million puds of grain they were previously allowed to keep as their share of food tax.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, relief commissions were organized by various government departments in Ukraine and contributed directly to the Russian aid fund. The Russian provinces of Samara, Tsaritsyn, Ural and Saratov were twinned with Ukraine and received famine relief directly. According to Fischer, Ukraine sent 1,127 train wagons of food to Russia as part of this twinning policy.<sup>71</sup> This represented some 1.1 million puds of food products. Evidence suggests that Ukraine probably furnished 1.6 million puds of foodstuffs in this fashion.<sup>72</sup>

The forced generosity of the Ukrainians astounded Western observers. Fisher made the following comment on a Soviet report praising Ukraine's selfless "assistance":

It is astonishing enough that these trainloads of food should have been loaded in Kiev and Poltava and sent hundreds of miles to the hungry along the Volga, instead of being transported a score or so miles across the gubernia [provincial] line to Odessa or Nikolaiev [Mykolaiv] where there was a first class famine in swing. It is even more astonishing, when one learns from an official report that Odessa Gubernia, with a crop of only seventeen per cent of normal, and with people dying of hunger in the streets of its principal towns as well as the huts of its villages, sent sixty-five cars to Central Russia, while Nikolaiev, with a crop only four per cent of normal, and containing in the city of Kherson the most desperately afflicted spot in south Russia [i.e., Ukraine], in fact one of the worst in the entire country, sent eight cars to the Volga. Of this the report incredibly says: "It is important to observe that even the famine gubernias sent bread to the Volga regions."<sup>73</sup>

Starving Ukrainians were forced to sacrifice their own lives to save hungry Russians, and this situation did not change even when some of the southern Ukrainian provinces were finally declared official famine zones in early 1922. As late as March of that year V. Quisling, Nan-

sen's envoy in Ukraine, saw posters in the famine districts of Mykolaiv urging the workers of that city to help the starving masses of the Volga provinces.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to sending huge quantities of food to Russia, Ukrainians were also obliged to feed a large number of Russians who migrated to Ukraine in 1921. Some of the two million Russians who flocked to Ukraine were famine refugees, others were members of the Red Army or officials of the Bolshevik regime. The Red Army, for instance, numbered about one million strong in Ukraine and less than 10 per cent of the troops were Ukrainians by nationality.<sup>75</sup> (Recall that Ukraine's population was 26 million at this time.) Lenin favoured using Ukraine as a feeding ground for the Russian population. In July 1921, for example, he urged the draft of some 500,000 to 1,000,000 young men from the Russian famine regions in order to send them to Ukraine where they would assist in the collection of food tax.<sup>76</sup> A large number of party workers and activists, Soviet cadres of various type were sent from Russia to Ukraine to administer the country. Russia sent 10,000 men to organize food collecting detachments, 20,000 men for food militia duty and numerous volunteers to fill up the ranks of food inspectors. This was Russia's contribution to what the Soviet scholar, O. M. Movchan calls, in all seriousness, the "fraternal mutual aid of the toilers of Ukraine and the Russian Federation in the struggle against the famine of 1921-22."<sup>77</sup>

Russian famine refugees flocked to Ukraine in great numbers. By the end of 1921, 439,000 people were evacuated by authorities from Russia and settled in Ukraine. Of this total, some 10,000 families or 50,000 individuals settled permanently in Ukraine and were granted privileges denied to the Ukrainian population. The Russian settlers obtained land, livestock, agricultural machinery, free seed, loans on easy terms and exemption from taxation for five years.<sup>78</sup> In addition to the organized evacuation, there was a steady tide of refugees who migrated on their own assistance and whose number equalled the state-sponsored evacuees.

Initially, the attitude of the Ukrainian population toward the Russian refugees was mixed. Some Ukrainians welcomed the refugees,<sup>79</sup> others thought that the famine on the Volga was a well-deserved punishment from God for the sins of the Communists.<sup>80</sup> However, the additional burden of the refugees within the context of a rapidly deteriorating food situation in Ukraine eventually exhausted the natural hospitality of the Ukrainian peasants. Golder recounts a meeting with an old Russian who was returning home after buying food in Ukraine:

He said that the feeling of the Ukrainian toward the Russian is quite

hostile. “You have made the revolution,” say the Ukrainians to the Russians, “go and live in it and don’t come to us.” This hostility has greatly increased in the last year or two, because of the thousands of refugees, because of the tax and the communists and the Russian soldiers stationed here, who collect it. “This year the tax,” said the patriarch, “is heavier than before and the hostility is consequently greater. A Russian can get no shelter and no help in the Ukrainian village.”<sup>81</sup>

The discontent of the Ukrainian peasant with the Communist regime found its expression in folklore. Two ditties illustrating peasant perceptions of Bolshevik behaviour were recorded in the Katerynoslav province in 1922:

Ah Ukraine, bread-producing  
And fertile  
You surrender tax in kind  
And yourself go hungry.

And the other:

Don’t be surprised brothers that we’re communists  
The muzhyk will produce the bread and we will eat it.<sup>82</sup>

Ukraine also took in 56,155 evacuated children and countless other youngsters who came on their own. These refugees received a treatment which was superior by far to that reserved for the destitute children of Ukraine. Shelters were provided for children from Russia in railway stations along the migration routes where they received food, clothing and medical care. Hospital trains were equipped in Ukraine and sent to Russia to save children suffering from famine and from famine-induced maladies. Ukrainian authorities were obliged to give priority to children from Russia, often completely neglecting Ukrainian children already in orphanages or roaming the streets. The preferential treatment accorded the Russian children explains the lower mortality rate among them as compared with their Ukrainian peers.<sup>83</sup>

Famine relief in Ukraine itself could begin only after official recognition had been accorded to the famine regions by competent authorities. This could not be done by the Ukrainian government on its own; it had to be decided “at the centre,” but Moscow did not see fit to act on the matter until early in 1922. By the end of 1921, the Ukrainian famine became so widely known that it could no longer be ignored even by the official press. On 25 November 1921 *Pravda* published a letter from Zaporizhzhia which reported that 175,000 people were starving in that province. In Hulai Pole, for instance, food surrogates were



gone and mortality was high in this small town where 5,000 refugees from the Volga had taken shelter. More important, the Soviet government came under pressure from the ARA and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to open Ukraine to foreign relief. The ARA became aware of the disastrous situation in Ukraine through its involvement in the food remittance programme. On 19 October 1921 a Food Remittance Agreement was signed by the ARA in Moscow, allowing the American agency to distribute care packages bought in the West. Most of the recipients were Jews who lived in Ukraine and Belorussia (the former Pale of Jewish Settlement in Tsarist Russia) and who had relatives and friends in North America who wanted to help them. The ARA intended to open distribution centres in Ukraine's main cities—such as Kiev, Kharkiv and Odessa. At the same time the JDC asked the ARA to investigate the food situation in Ukraine since the Jews in America were receiving alarming reports from their relatives in southern Ukraine.<sup>84</sup>

Soviet response to Western concern for Ukraine was negative from the start. The request of Colonel William N. Haskell, the ARA director for Russia, that Dr. Lincoln Hutchinson and Dr. F. A. Golder be allowed to visit Ukraine in order to make arrangements for the establishment of food remittance stations and to study the food situation in that country was turned down by A. Eiduk, Moscow's plenipotentiary with Western relief agencies. Eiduk explained that the provinces of Kiev, Volhynia, Podillia, Chernihiv and Poltava had produced surplus crops and were in fact helping the Volga region. Furthermore, he stressed that it was "necessary to request the ARA not to split its forces, but to concentrate them entirely on the Volga area."<sup>85</sup> Unlike Moscow, the ARA and JDC did not intend to abandon southern Ukraine.

Through persistent pressure, Hutchinson and Golder were eventually allowed to visit Ukraine. There they met with new problems. Mykola Skrypnyk, Commissar of the Interior in the Rakovsky government, refused to allow the ARA to function in Ukraine until it signed a separate agreement with Ukraine, similar to the Riga agreement with Russia, on the grounds that Ukraine was a separate state and agreements with Russia were not binding on the Ukrainian government. The ARA delegation refused to do so and returned to Moscow empty handed. It was only on 10 January 1922, almost five months after the Riga agreement with Russia, that a similar treaty was signed in Moscow between the ARA and the government of Ukraine. Skrypnyk's nationalist pose was more a reflection of Moscow's delaying tactics than of the growing sense of Ukrainian autonomy. After all, Moscow was on record as wanting all foreign aid to go to the Volga region and not to be fragmented.<sup>86</sup>

Even as the Ukrainian relief agreement was being signed in Moscow the Ukrainian provinces experiencing starvation were denied official recognition as famine zones. The fact that the Soviet government delayed in extending famine status to Ukrainian regions was noted in the press of the period. Thus a Kharkiv newspaper reporting on the famine in Mykolaiv province wrote: "Mykolaiv province—relief—there was no state aid at all. Only after five months of famine was the province recognized, in February 1922, as a famine area. Until then, tax in kind continued to be collected."<sup>87</sup> A work analyzing the famine in Ukraine published in Kharkiv in 1922 noted, "Soviet authorities were interested in collecting tax in kind from the population in full. That is why provinces with poor harvests were declared famine areas only when . . . it became obvious that not a pud more could be taken."<sup>88</sup> Soviet prevarication in declaring famine zones applied only to Ukraine: in Russia famine areas were recognized much earlier. Moreover, in Ukraine official recognition was not a guarantee against further exploitation. Starving Ukrainian provinces, as noted above, continued to send food to Russia. The Soviet press stooped to crass cynicism in rationalizing this exploitative practice when it publicized approvingly the unlikely pledge of poor peasants from Zaporizhzhia province: "We will all die from famine [willingly], provided this saves the revolution!"<sup>89</sup>

The full scope of the Ukrainian famine was never admitted either by Moscow or by Kharkiv. Writing in *Pravda* on 1 February 1922, Petrovsky felt that recognition should be extended to the province of Zaporizhzhia (in full), Mykolaiv (the raions of Mykolaiv, Kherson and Dnipropetrovsk), Odessa (the Taraspil county in full and half of Verkhnedniprovskiy raion), and Donetsk (Mariupil and Tahanrih raions). Although Petrovsky admitted that as early as the beginning of November 1921, 2.5 million Ukrainians were starving, he put the figure for January 1922 at 4 million and only requested that the *prodna*log be lowered from 100 million puds of grain to 68 million and that Ukraine be granted 6 million puds of foodstuffs for famine relief. Petrovsky downplayed the Ukrainian famine as did most Soviet officials. A more realistic and sinister picture of the situation was painted by Quisling who toured Ukraine in February and March 1922. He reported that the five southern provinces (Odessa, Mykolaiv, Katerynoslav, Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk) were overcome by famine in their entirety, and that the southern half of the provinces of Kremenchuk, Poltava and Kharkiv were also starving. Out of a total population of 16 million, 4 or 5 million in these regions were already starving and the figure would reach 6 to 7 million before the next crop was taken in.<sup>90</sup> Only later did Rakovsky confess that "to the detriment of many Ukrainian provinces they

were not recognized officially as starving.” The head of the Ukrainian government added further that “only in March was permission granted to international organizations to bring aid to the population.”<sup>91</sup>

Official permission notwithstanding, the ARA kitchens in Ukraine opened only on 30 April 1922, eight months after they began to function in Russia. Until that time Soviet officials continued to lay obstacles before the relief agencies. At first they tried to allot most of Ukraine to the International Committee for Russian Relief represented by Nansen because it was more pliable and subservient to the Soviet administration. Ukraine was even divided into two zones, with Nansen receiving the provinces of Mykolaiv, Donetsk and Odessa (without the city of Odessa), while the ARA became responsible for the city of Odessa and the provinces of Zaporizhzhia and Katerynoslav. Gradually the ARA fed all the provinces except the industrial part of the Donetsk region from which it was formally excluded. At the height of its operation, in August 1922, the ARA fed 978,942 children and 975,572 adults in Ukraine.<sup>92</sup>

Aid to Ukraine from the Soviet authorities was minimal in both the winter of 1921–2 and the following spring. In May 1922, the official count of the number of starving in Ukraine was 3.8 million, about half the real figure, and the Soviet government sent 3.2 million puds of grain for seed and another 1.8 million for nourishment. Russian provinces, suffering from famine and previously twinned to Ukraine, were now detached, and the famine aid raised in Ukraine was to be kept for Ukraine.<sup>93</sup> Food supplies were now also reaching southern Ukraine from the Right Bank and the northern Ukrainian provinces. Complete statistics are not available for the famine relief sent to Ukraine either from foreign agencies or by the Soviet government. Evidence suggests that Ukraine received but a small fraction of the aid sent to the Soviet republics. No help whatsoever came from Russia itself, even though Ukraine was obliged to continue sending food and medicine to Russia throughout the whole famine period.<sup>94</sup>

### *Overcoming the “Aftermath”: the Unrecognized Year (1922–3)*

“It is now known,” wrote H. H. Fisher in 1927, “that the Russian [i.e., Soviet] people fortunately escaped the fate which many feared awaited them [in 1922–3].”<sup>95</sup> Autumn and winter came and went, but “famine conditions did not reappear,” and even with the sudden arrival of spring, “there was no repetition of the ghastly famine of the year before.”<sup>96</sup> In line with this schema, Fisher, who wrote a monograph con-

sidered to be the standard work on ARA activities in Russia, which identified two distinct periods in the work of the ARA: “the famine year, 1921–22” and “the aftermath of famine, 1922–23.” This is similar to the Soviet treatment of the 1921–3 famine as a “food crisis” made up of two stages: “the famine” and “the aftermath.”<sup>97</sup> Such periodization is more political than scholarly for it describes the sequence of events as the Soviet authorities wished them to appear and not as they actually happened and as they are revealed by documentary evidence. Many Western scholars follow this model and present the first Soviet famine as a catastrophe occurring only in 1921 and forget to mention the fact that the famine continued until 1923.<sup>98</sup>

Good climatic conditions in the spring of 1922 renewed Soviet hopes of a speedy recovery. N. P. Briukhanov, Commissar for Food, reported on 20 July 1922 that the harvest for the Soviet republics in 1922 would be 2,700 million puds of grain and potatoes, and that there would thus be a surplus of 150 to 200 million puds for export.<sup>99</sup> This estimate was optimistic, if not deliberately inflated. Today, Soviet scholars give a more modest figure of 2,211,711,000 puds as the harvest for the whole Soviet territory; 637 million puds for Ukraine.<sup>100</sup> There is good reason to think that Briukhanov’s harvest figures were inflated by about 20 per cent with the government’s complicity, if not its direct instigation.<sup>101</sup> State policy and planning were based on this optimistic forecast. The government decided that the famine was over and that the reconstruction of the economy could commence. Accordingly, the Russian Central Executive Committee decreed on 7 September that *TsK Pomgol* would be abolished as of 15 October and that its place would be taken by the “Commission to Combat the Consequences of the Famine” (*TsK Posledgol* in Russian and *TsK Naslidhol* in Ukrainian).<sup>102</sup> The famine ceased to exist officially in Soviet public life; at the same time it lost its place in Soviet scholarship.

In fact, famine conditions were not eliminated either in Russia or in Ukraine until the next year, that is, 1923. Even Fisher had to admit that during the “aftermath” starvation recurred “in spots here and there in the Volga, in one or two places on the coast of the Black Sea.”<sup>103</sup> In a recent dissertation on the relief work in Russia, C. M. Edmondson has argued convincingly that there is enough evidence to “remove any doubt that might have existed that the famine endured into 1923 on a large scale.”<sup>104</sup> Edmondson’s study covered only Russia, but his conclusions apply to Ukraine as well. An official report on the activities of the Ukrainian *TsK Naslidhol* specified that in some raions “peasants began to feel the lack of food soon after the harvest,” and that “the total peasant population needing help in the hungry provinces was 679,000, and in the others 100,000.”<sup>105</sup> The situation grew worse by



the day. At a conference held in Kharkiv on 3 January 1923 under the chairmanship of Nansen and attended by the representatives of the Ukrainian government and of the *TsK Naslidhol*, Rakovsky revealed the bleak state of Ukrainian affairs. One-third of Ukraine was once more in the grip of the famine and the situation was worse than it had been in the Volga region a year earlier. The Commissariat for Food (*Narkomprod*) of the Ukrainian SSR estimated that a total of 5,640,000 children and adults had to be helped that year.<sup>106</sup>

Ukraine also had to take care of one million orphans and 315,000 homeless children (including over 50,000 from Russia).<sup>107</sup> The fate of the Ukrainian children was particularly difficult. During the first year of the famine, state-run children's shelters cared for only 150,000 youngsters, many of whom came from Russia; (in some shelters up to 80 per cent were Russian refugees). In August 1922 all shelters for homeless children were closed in Ukraine except for those in Kiev, Konotop and Kharkiv, which continued to cater to the evacuees from Russia.<sup>108</sup>

The severity of the famine in Ukraine during 1922–3 can be gleaned from the contemporary Soviet press. *Bilshovyk*, the organ of the Communist Party for the Kiev province, published on 15 August 1922 several reports and short notes on the development of the famine in various parts of southern Ukraine. Most of the references were to Mykolaiv province, especially to Kherson county which suffered most during 1921 and 1922. A report from Kherson stated that because of the reduction in sown area and the destruction of a large portion of the winter and summer crops, “famine has already begun in six wards (*volosti*) of the raion.” Another article in the same issue related that “in [the city of] Kherson about eight people die every day from hunger, and in the raion they die by the hundreds.” In its 12 December 1922 issue, *Bilshovyk* claimed that “famine in the Mykolaiv region was reaching last year's proportions.” On 4 January 1923, *Bilshovyk* noted that 200,000 people were starving in Elizavet raion, while the northern half of Mykolaiv raion was passing from the “fortunate” category to that of the famished. Reports of famine and deaths from starvation in Mykolaiv oblast could be found in *Bilshovyk* as late as 6 March 1923. It is small wonder that when the peasants realized the catastrophic situation in which they found themselves after the 1922 harvest, many of them came to the Mykolaiv oblast authorities with the request that collective farms be established and that they be allowed to join them. The peasants hoped, in this way, to save themselves from starvation.<sup>109</sup> Famine in Katerynoslav province was reported in September 1922 and again in January of the next year. At this later date newspapers carried complaints that only 150,000 of the 560,000 starving were getting any



aid.<sup>110</sup> The Donbas reported 400,000 famine victims in January 1923 and Zaporizhzhia reported many deaths from hunger in March of the same year.<sup>111</sup>

Famine could have been eliminated completely in 1922–3 if the government had taken advantage of the improved harvest and the willingness of the foreign relief agencies to continue their work as long as it was necessary. Moscow, however, was more interested in resuming foreign trade than in stamping out hunger. In the summer of 1922 the Soviet government decided to resume grain export on a large scale. Litvinov made this known at the Hague Conference in July, and in September the Soviet Bureau in Berlin announced that it had 2,750,000 tons of grain for sale.<sup>112</sup>

Soviet talk of grain export, at a time when the country was still in the throes of an unyielding famine, scandalized the West and threatened to jeopardize the relief programme.<sup>113</sup> The question was debated passionately during the summer and fall of 1922. Hoover, Haskell, Nansen and other Western administrators argued that large areas were still threatened by the famine and that all Soviet food resources were needed to stamp it out. If the Soviet government began to export, they insisted, it would be impossible to convince the West to continue its generosity toward famine relief.

Whatever doubts Moscow may have entertained about the necessity of keeping all the harvest to feed its own citizens were dispelled when the crops were brought in. It became clear that the Soviet republics could not sell grain abroad without starving part of their own population. Imminent famine notwithstanding, the government decided to go through with the sale of wheat for the sake of the much needed capital for heavy industry. As Lenin later explained to a meeting of the Third International in Moscow, while agriculture, small industry and commerce had come back to life, heavy industry was still mortally ill. Significant capital was needed to revive industry, and the government had only limited funds at its disposal.<sup>114</sup> To save industry it was necessary either to borrow from abroad or to export grain: but to save the peasants, all food had to be kept in the country and more had to be imported.

Western concern for the starving Soviet peasants made it possible for the Soviet government to blackmail relief agencies. The ARA was asked to continue feeding four million Soviet citizens and to ignore Soviet grain exports. If the ARA were to insist that the Soviet government not go through with its Soviet wheat sale, then, Soviet authorities argued, the ARA had to arrange a foreign loan for the Soviet state of about 10 or 12 million dollars.<sup>115</sup> The Soviet government was actually holding its own starving citizens as hostages to be ransomed for foreign aid. The blackmail succeeded and the foreign relief agencies continued

to provide food for another year. In January 1923, inhabitants of Odessa could witness the bizarre spectacle of the *SS Manitowac* discharging a cargo of ARA relief supplies in their port while alongside the *SS Vladimir* was at the same moment loading a cargo of Ukrainian grain destined for Hamburg.<sup>116</sup>

The sale of Ukrainian agricultural produce abroad was reported by the Soviet press. On 28 February 1923, *Bilshovyk* informed its readers that the first shipment of Ukrainian grain, consisting of one million puds had just arrived in Hamburg. Preparations were also under way to sell Ukrainian wheat to Italy and to send it to the international fair in Lyon, France. Several weeks later, when Petrovsky tried to justify the export policy of the Soviet government to the Ukrainian people, he was answered by the peasants of the village of Dementivka, Kharkiv raion, that Ukraine could not afford to export wheat and should instead import food for its hungry population.<sup>117</sup> Just as during the first year of the famine, grain collection points were often subject to sabotage or even armed attacks, so too in mid-April 1923, the Mykolaiv grain elevator was set on fire, destroying the 580,000 puds of wheat destined for export.<sup>118</sup> This was a desperate act, a gesture of protest by the starving peasants.

The Soviet export that year was far below the prewar sales of tsarist Russia. Precise statistics are not available to substantiate Soviet claims that the amounts sold were negligible. An American consular official put the total amount of grain and fodder sold abroad by November 1923 at 45 million puds.<sup>119</sup> Some of this was probably from the new 1923 harvest, but most of it had undoubtedly been collected the previous year. We do not know what portion of this commercial grain came from Ukraine, but it can be safely assumed that, in line with Soviet policy, Ukraine supplied most of the grain exported.

During the second year of the famine (1922), just as in the first, Ukraine was the main victim of Soviet economic policies. The tax in kind for Ukraine in 1922 was set at 95 million puds on the basis of an *estimated* harvest of over one billion puds for the eight principal cereals. However, the real harvest yielded only a little more than half the forecasted amount. Despite this, the tax in kind was maintained at the 95-million-pud level. By the end of 1922 Ukraine, once again, overfulfilled its tax quota since its peasantry had over 100 million puds taken from them.<sup>120</sup> Approximately 20 per cent of the tax in kind was raised in the southern provinces, where conditions continued to be particularly bad. This region had suffered a major decline in sown area in 1922 and lost almost half of its cattle. The region's harvest, officially recorded as 183 million puds (in reality less than 150 million) was insufficient to feed its population, livestock and to supply seed for the

following year's sowing.<sup>121</sup> In addition to the tax in kind, the Ukrainian peasantry had to pay a special famine tax which consisted of two pounds of grain for every pud of grain paid in kind and the same amount for every pud ground into flour in state mills.<sup>122</sup> This special "two pounds tax," as it was called, netted the government another 5 or 6 million puds of grain in Ukraine.

Weakened by the famine, the Ukrainian population became prey to epidemics of various kinds. Typhus and cholera, brought to Ukraine by the refugees from Russia, spread quickly among the starving Ukrainian population. Children, students, intellectuals and the growing army of urban unemployed were the first victims of the epidemics.<sup>123</sup> Foreign medical aid came to Ukraine only in 1922; until that time Ukraine had organized medical assistance for the Volga region.

Famine in Ukraine continued until 1923, but in 1922 the mortality from starvation and epidemics began to decline. This is explained by a number of factors. The 1922 harvest, somewhat better than that of 1921, increased the amount of food available. While Soviet exports diminished food supplies, exports were not large enough to offset the gains of the new harvest. Foreign relief continued to play an important role, even though the number of people fed declined in comparison with the preceding year. The ARA maintained its leading role in relief assistance and at the height of its activity, in June 1922, it fed half a million Ukrainian children and several thousand adults. In Russia, it fed about five times that number.<sup>124</sup> That year, Ukrainian famine regions were also getting some aid in the form of seed loans from the government and direct aid from the more fortunate provinces of northern Ukraine.<sup>125</sup>

One would expect that for a famine which was officially recognized there would be fairly reliable statistical data on the number of victims. One is, therefore, surprised to find such wide discrepancies in the estimates of the number of people that died. The Soviet historian Iu. A. Poliakov offered a figure of one million; S. G. Strumlinin, a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, writing in 1922 spoke of 5 million. The Western scholar Edmondson arrived at a figure of 10 million and M. Maksudov, in a careful demographic analysis, mentions 3.6 million deaths.<sup>126</sup> These figures represent the total number of famine victims for all the Soviet republics. Strumlinin's and Maksudov's analyses appear to be the most reliable and a rounded figure of about 4 to 5 million deaths for the whole Soviet Union seems fairly accurate.

There are also various estimates as to the number of victims in Ukraine. In December 1922, Petrovsky claimed that by May 1922 Ukraine had suffered 125,000 deaths from the famine. More reliable is a report from the Ukrainian government to the Council of Commissars

of the RSFSR dated 15 July 1922 which specified that in the first half of 1922 Ukraine lost 500,000 people.<sup>131</sup> It should be remembered that deaths in Ukraine up to January 1922 were not included in the official statistics because officially there was no famine until that time in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Commissariat of Health, in an official report, spoke of 800,000 victims for the same period.<sup>132</sup> In Western scholarship one can find estimates varying from one to three million.<sup>133</sup> Three million is undoubtedly too high. However, if one adds to the official Soviet calculations for the first half of 1922, the high number of deaths which occurred in the second half of 1921 and during the subsequent year, between the summer harvest of 1922 and 1923, one could reasonably estimate famine losses in Ukraine at 1.5 to 2 million. If the Ukrainian figure is subtracted from the total Soviet number of 4 to 5 million, it is evident that on a per capita basis the Ukrainian nation lost more people than did the Russian, a loss that could have been avoided.

### *Conclusion*

The 1921 famine in Russia was caused by natural calamities, albeit aggravated by the regime's economic and political policies. In Ukraine it was brought about primarily by excessive taxation and outright plunder; the drought prevented the peasants from replenishing confiscated stores. In Russia nature was the chief cause of the famine, whereas in Ukraine the state was responsible.

Once the famine broke out in Ukraine, the regime was not loath to use it to political advantage. The Soviet authorities continued to exact taxes and other payments throughout the whole period, and they delayed official recognition of the Ukrainian famine regions and prevented internal and foreign aid from reaching these areas until many thousands had already starved to death. This was done in order to divert Ukrainian food to the starving masses on the Volga, and because Moscow had a direct interest in prolonging the famine in Ukraine. For Moscow, the famine was a blessing in disguise. It was an effective way of crushing Ukrainian peasant resistance to the Soviet regime, and was a powerful weapon against the peasant-supported armed rebels. Startled by the famine in Russia the Soviet authorities decided to exploit its merits in Ukraine. Stalin had a model for his own ventures ten years later.

## NOTES

Part of the research for this paper was undertaken at the Summer Laboratory of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, whose organizers I wish to thank. I also wish to express gratitude to Marco Carynnyk for providing me with materials from his private collection.

1. Until the creation of the USSR in December 1922, the Ukrainian SSR was formally an independent republic.
2. A good example of this approach is the history of the Soviet Union written by the two recent émigré scholars, M. Hiller and A. Nekrich, *Utopie au pouvoir: Histoire de l'URSS de 1917 à nos jours* (Paris 1982), 97–102.
3. Contemporary observers noted the unequal treatment of the starving populations of Russia and Ukraine. See for example, F. A. Golder and L. Hutchinson, *On the Trail of the Russian Famine* (Stanford 1927), 133, 143; V. Quisling, *La famine en Ukraine* (Geneva 1922), 4; E. Gilson, "Enquête sur la situation actuelle des enfants en Ukraine et dans les régions de la Volga," *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge* (October 1922): 884–5.
4. Among the documents published in the West, mention should be made of the *American Relief Administration Bulletin*, the *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge* and the *Bulletin international de la Croix Rouge*. For Soviet publications, see *Itogi borby s golodom v 1921–22 gg.* (Moscow 1922) and M. B. Gurevich, *Golod i selskoe khoziaistvo Ukrainy* (Kharkiv 1923).
5. Ivan Herasymovych's excellent monograph, *Holod na Ukraini* (Berlin 1922), unfortunately covers only the first year of the famine. Iu. A. Poliakov's *1921-i. Pobeda nad golodom* (Moscow 1975) is little more than a pamphlet.
6. A careful observer will distinguish three intertwined yet distinct sets of conflicts: a) civil war between the Russian Red and White forces; b) sporadic interventions by Russia's former western allies; and c) campaigns by both the Red and the White armies to reconquer the non-Russian republics which had proclaimed their independence from Russia after the October Revolution.
7. Committees of Poor Peasants were introduced in Ukraine in 1918 with the arrival of Bolshevik troops from Russia. At that time they were called *Komitety bidnoty* or *kombidy*. The *kombidy* collapsed when Bolshevik troops retreated from Ukraine in 1919 and were reintroduced in May 1920 when the same troops reoccupied Ukraine. After 1920 the committees were called *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian* or *komnezamy*—literally, Committees of Unwealthy Peasants. Throughout this article we will use the more familiar English translation of *komnezamy* as Committees of Poor Peasants.



8. *Vosma Konferentsiia RKP(b). Protokoly* (Moscow 1961), 96, cited by K. Nakai, "Soviet Agricultural Policies in the Ukraine and the 1921–1922 Famine," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, no. 1 (1982): 50. Herasymovych considered both the *komnezamy* and the collectivization drive as important contributors to the 1932–3 famine. Herasymovych, *Holod* 58–61.
9. The Committees of Poor Peasants received between 10 and 25 per cent of the foodstuffs they helped confiscate. See *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian Ukrainy. Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv*. (Kiev 1968), 15. This incentive often led to arbitrary and abusive behaviour on the part of the requisitioning agents. See *Istoriia Ukrainskoi RSR*, 8 vols. (Kiev 1977–9), 5: 463.
10. Peasant uprisings were not crushed in Ukraine until 1924. O. O. Kucher, *Rozhrom zbroinoi vnutrishnoi kontrrevoliutsii na Ukraini v 1921–1923 rr.* (Kharkiv 1977), 161.
11. The sown area in the European part of the Russian Empire and later in the Soviet Union was 89.3 million hectares in 1909–13, 90.7 in 1916, 62.1 in 1920 and 53.9 in 1921. See *The Russian Famines 1921–22, 1922–23*. Summary Report of the Committee on Russian Relief. (New York 1923), 22–3. In Ukraine the figures were: 1919: 22 million hectares, 1920: 17.6 million and 1921: 15.4 million hectares. See *Istoriia Ukrainskoi RSR* (Kiev 1967), 2: 168 and *Kommunisticheskaia Partiia vdokhnovitel i organizator obedinitelnogo dvizheniia ukrainskogo naroda za obrazovanie SSSR* (Kiev 1972), 406. SSSR (Kiev 1972), 406.
12. Before the First World War, the grain harvest in the Russian Empire yielded over 4 billion puds of grain. Ukraine accounted for approximately a quarter of this total. In 1920 all the Soviet republics together produced a little over 2 billion puds, including the 300 million puds harvested in Ukraine. (One pud equals 16.3 kilogrammes.) See H. H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia: 1919–1923: The Operation of the American Relief Administration* (New York 1927) (reprinted 1971), 403.
13. C. M. Edmondson, "Soviet Famine Relief Measures, 1921–1923," (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1977), 60–78.
14. *Pravda*, 15 January 1918 cited by E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–1923* (London 1966), 1: 301.
15. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniia*, 5th ed. 55 vols. (Moscow 1958–65), 50: 30 (hereafter *Sochineniia*). For a discussion of Lenin's attitude toward grain supplies in Ukraine, see Nakai, "Soviet Agricultural Policies," 44–56.
16. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, 37: 465–8.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 38: 69.
19. See *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, 15. For a discussion of the role of the *komnezamy* in collecting taxes in Ukraine, see *Pravda*, 14 August 1921,

- and M. D. Berezovchuk, "Rol' komnezamiv u sotsialistychanii perebudovi sela," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 3 (1960): 46.
20. Lenin, *Sochinenia*, 38: 68.
  21. *Vosma Konferentsiia RKR(b)*, 95–6.
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. In Russia, including Siberia, the overall decline in land under cultivation was 25 per cent. In Ukraine the drop was about 15 per cent. See Iu. A. Poliakov, *Perekhod k nepu i sovetskoe krestianstvo* (Moscow 1967), 283–4.
  24. *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, 14.
  25. As late as 29 May 1921, *Pravda* carried an article entitled "The Struggle Against the Famine," complaining about starvation conditions of industrial workers in Russia and Belorussia.
  26. Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 285.
  27. "Golod v Povolzhe i mery pomoshchi," *Pravda*, 26 June 1921.
  28. *La revue internationale de la Croix Rouge*, no. 31 (1921): 796.
  29. *American Relief Administration Bulletin*, no. 16 (1921) (Second Series): 1. (hereafter *ARA Bulletin*).
  30. G. Lydogensky, "La famine en Russie soviétique," *La revue internationale de la Croix Rouge*, no. 32 (1921): 794.
  31. B. M. Weisman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia: 1921–1923*, (Stanford 1974), 9.
  32. *Pravda*, 6 August 1921. Weisman's error stems from a faulty translation of "Pravoberezhnaia Ukraina" which he rendered as "the well protected Ukraine" instead of "Right-Bank Ukraine." Weisman's unfortunate mistake was repeated by Nakai, "Soviet Agricultural Policies," 57.
  33. Within a short period of time some 484 party workers were sent from Kharkiv to examine food conditions in all Ukrainian provinces. O. M. Movchan, "Braterska vzaiemodopomoha trudiashchykh Ukrainy i Rosiiskoi Federatsii v borotbi z holodom (1921–1922 rr.)," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 10 (1982): 81.
  34. M. B. Gurevich, *Golod i selskoe khoziaistvo Ukrainy* (Kharkiv 1923), 3.
  35. S. G. Strumilin, *Izobrazhnye proizvedeniia*, 3 vols. (Moscow 1962), 2: 20–1.
  36. *Ibid.* Quisling estimated Ukraine's grain needs at 700 million puds (400 million for food, 150 million for seed and 150 million for fodder). See Quisling, *La famine*, 1. These figures were accepted by Etienne Gilson, a professor sent by the French Red Cross in 1922 to examine the Ukrainian situation. "Enquête sur la situation des enfants en Ukraine et dans les régions de la Volga," *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge* (October 1922): 889. Even Lenin, never too generous when it came to recognizing Ukraine's needs, conceded that the Ukrainian peasantry needed 450 million puds of grain (300 million to feed itself and its cattle, 150 million for

- seed). Lenin, *Sochinennia*, 44: 67. Twelve puds was considered a survival ration. See *The Russian Famines*, 20. Even at this minimal level Ukraine would have needed 312 million puds just to feed its population.
37. Gurevich, *Golod*, 3 and *Bilshovyk*, 6 January 1923.
  38. L. Hutchinson, "Observations in the Ukraine," *ARA Bulletin*. (March 1922) (Second Series): 9.
  39. Golder and Hutchinson, *On the Trail*, 126.
  40. Gurevich, *Golod*, 33.
  41. Kucher, *Rozhrom* 9; J. E. Mace. *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918–1933* (Cambridge 1983), 65.
  42. *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia*. 2 vols., ed. V. Kubijovyč, (Toronto 1963, 1971), 1: 768.
  43. Quoted in Kucher, *Rozhrom*, 10.
  44. Mace, *Communism*, 65.
  45. Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 56–7.
  46. For a concise history of the *VK Pomgol*, see I. A. Chemerisskii, "Iz istorii klassovoi borby v 1921 g. (Vserossiiskii komitet pomoshchi golodaiushchim)," *Istoricheskii zapiski*, no. 77 (1965): 190–208.
  47. *Bulletin international de la Croix Rouge* (15 July 1921): 801–2.
  48. *Bulletin communiste*, no. 32 (1921): 549–50; Lenin, *Sochinennia*, 44: 75–6; Fisher, *The Famine*, 246, 264.
  49. For a discussion of the Riga negotiations and the Riga Agreement, see Fisher, *The Famine*, 52, 59–62, 507–10.
  50. *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge* (15 September 1921): 887–918; (15 January 1922): 1–13.
  51. *Bulletin international de la Croix Rouge* (15 October 1921): 1107.
  52. Fisher, *The Famine*, 80, 83.
  53. *Pravda*, 23 July 1921; M. I. Kalinin, "Itogi golodnoi kampanii," in *Itogi posledgol* (Moscow 1923), 15.
  54. Thus five more provinces were added on 5 August 1921. "Iz protokola Plenuma i Prezidiuma TsK Pomgola," *Biulleten TsK pomoshchi golodaiushchim VTsIK*, no. 1 (1921): 24.
  55. Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 311.
  56. *Pravda*, 20 September 1921.
  57. Fisher, *The Famine*, 422.
  58. *Ibid.*, 557.
  59. Kalinin, "Itogi," 15. The Red Army raised 900,700 puds and the trade unions gave 688,860.
  60. *Ibid.*, 16.
  61. Poliakov, *Perekhod k nepu*, 288–9; Fisher, *The Famine*, 386.
  62. Fisher, *The Famine*, 261.
  63. Not only was Ukraine ignored in the first pleas from Soviet authorities for

foreign aid, but even the note of the Ukrainian Red Cross representative delivered to the 15 August 1921 Geneva conference pleaded for famine relief, not for Ukraine, but only for Russia. *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge* (15 September 1921): 898.

64. Lenin, *Sochinennia*, 52: 196.
65. *Ibid.*, 54: 67.
66. L. Hutchinson, "Observations in the Ukraine," *ARA Bulletin*, no. 22 (1922) (Second Series): 7. M. Popov, the chief of the Central Statistical Bureau in Moscow, later reduced his estimates of the Ukrainian harvest to 580 million puds, while the Ukrainian statisticians lowered their figure to 276 million. See *Report on Economic Conditions in Russia*, 37, cited by Nakai, "Soviet Agricultural Policies," 58.
67. Fisher, *The Famine*, 251.
68. *Istoriia Ukrainskoi RSR*, 5: 464; 6: 30.
69. This was probably the 51 million puds referred to by Hutchinson as having been delivered to Russia by Ukraine in 1921. Hutchinson, "Observations in the Ukraine," 9.
70. *Istoriia Ukrainskoi RSR*, 6: 30.
71. *Pravda*, 11 February 1922.
72. *Istoriia Ukrainskoi RSR*, 7: 27; *The Russian Famines*, 32.
73. *Pravda*, 1 February 1922; Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 49-50; Herasymovych, *Holod*, 72.
74. Movchan, "Braterska vzaïmodopomoha," 82-3.
75. Fisher, *The Famine*, 262.
76. Translated from Movchan, "Braterska vzaïmodopomoha," 83 and *Kommunisticheskaia partiia*, 449.
77. Fisher, *The Famine*, 262-3.
78. Quisling, *La Famine*, 2.
79. Herasymovych, *Holod*, 49, 195.
80. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, 44: 67.
81. Movhan, "Braterska vzaïmodopomoha," 81.
82. *Ibid.*, 86-7.
83. Fisher, *The Famine*, 260.
84. N. Dmytruk, "Holod na Ukraini r. 1921," *Etnohrafichnyi vistnyk*, no. 4 (1927): 80.
85. Golder and Hutchison, *On the Trail*, 210.
86. O. V. Oleksieva, "Korotenko pisni (*chastushky*) rokiv 1917-1925," *Etnohrafichnyi vistnyk*, no. 1 (1925): 25, 26.
87. Golder and Hutchison, *On the Trail*, 143, 146. Ukrainian assistance to Russian children is discussed by Dr. Kholodny and M. Gamalia in *Bulletin international de la Croix Rouge* (15 March 1922): 271, and Movchan, "Braterska vzaïmodopomoha," 87.
88. For a detailed description of the ARA and the JDC involvement in

Ukraine, see Fisher, *The Famine*, 246 ff.

89. Cited in *ibid.*, 248.
90. It is still a moot point as to whether Skrypnyk's behaviour was in response to direct orders from Moscow or whether it also reflected his own personal ambitions. It is possible that the two may have coincided, but the practical implications were the same in either case—aid to Ukraine was delayed. The fact that Eiduk, who displayed such fervour in opposing foreign aid to Ukraine, later became that republic's representative to the international relief agencies, makes a mockery of Skrypnyk's autonomism. A formal treaty with Ukraine implied a certain recognition of the Ukrainian SSR. The Bolsheviks wanted such recognition for they saw it not as a gesture against Russia, but as an abandonment by the West of the Ukrainian national government in exile. On this question, see F. Comte, "Christian Rakovskij, commissaire aux affaires étrangères de l'Ukraine, janvier 1919-août 1923," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, no. 4 (1971): 441ff.
91. "Tam gde byli zhitnitsy," *Pomoshch golodnym. Odnodnevnaia gazeta*, 10 March 1922, cited by Herasymovych, *Holod*, 72.
92. V. A. Arnautov, *Golod i deti na Ukraine* (Kharkiv 1922), 23–4.
93. *Pomoshch golodnym*, cited by Herasymovych, *Holod*, 200.
94. Quisling, *La Famine*, 2. When in March 1922 Quisling asked Moscow authorities about the situation in Ukraine, he was told that only half a million people were starving.
95. *Bilshovyk*, 17 August 1922. Nansen later expressed his regret to the Ukrainian Red Cross for not being able to bring more help to Ukraine. He added: "The plea for help to Ukraine came somewhat late and the reserves of food products were already allocated to other destinations." See *Bilshovyk*, 24 January 1923.
96. Fisher, *The Famine*, 269–70, 557.
97. Movchan, "Braterska vzaiemodopomoha," 85–6.
98. See *Pravda*, 2 March 1922, article by B. Nevskii.
99. Fisher, *The Famine*, 329.
100. *Ibid.*, 330, 374.
101. See for example, Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 336.
102. See R. G. Robbins Jr., "Famine in Russia," *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, ed. J. L. Wiczynski, 2 vols., (Gulf Breeze Fla. 1974), 2: 47, 49. V. Markus, "Famine," in *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, ed. V. Kubijovych, (Toronto 1984), 1: 853.
103. Edmondson, "Soviet Famine Relief," 201–11. At the same time *Bilshovyk* wrote that the expected harvest for Ukraine was 1,014,000 puds! *Bilshovyk*, 20 August 1922.
104. Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 335; *Istoriia Ukrainskoi RSR*, 6: 69.
105. The more reliable estimates based on local reports totalled 1,761 million



- puds. See *The Russian Famines*, 9, and Edmondson, "Soviet Famine Relief," 215. An observer of Ukrainian affairs considered the official figures for Ukraine 20 per cent too high. See *Nova Ukraina*, no. 4 (1923): 126.
106. *Itogi posledgol*, 34; Edmondson, "Soviet Famine Relief," 221. The agency had the acronym *TsK Posledgol* in Russian and *TsK Naslidhol* in Ukrainian.
  107. Fisher, *The Famine*, 374.
  108. Edmondson, "Soviet Famine Relief," 219. See also 215–20.
  109. Batkis, "Rabota TsK Posledgol USSR [Ukrainian SSR]," in *Itogi posledgol*, 111. Etienne Gilson, who visited Ukraine in August 1922, confirmed that Oleksandrivsk, Melitopol and Zaporizhzhia regions were starving and that Odessa oblast had reserves for only a month and a half. See Gilson, "Enquête sur la situation actuelle," 890.
  110. *Nova Ukraina*, no. 5, (1923): 157.
  111. *Ibid.* *The Times* of London, 17 September 1923, reported that there were 1.5 million homeless children in Ukraine; of these 300,000 were Jews.
  112. Batkis, "Rabota," 112, 114.
  113. *Bilshovyk*, 10 August 1922.
  114. *Bilshovyk*, 10 September 1922, 27 January 1923.
  115. *Bilshovyk*, 12 January, 7 March 1923.
  116. Fisher, *The Famine*, 301, 310, 311. *Kommunist*, the Kharkiv newspaper was even more optimistic than Litvinov. In August 1922 it asked "Who will buy the 212 million puds of grain that Ukraine has in surplus?" Gilson, "Enquête sur la situation actuelle," 883.
  117. *Bulletin international de la Croix Rouge* (October 1922): 810.
  118. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, 45: 277–94; Fisher, *The Famine*, 326.
  119. Fisher, *The Famine*, 321.
  120. *Ibid.*, 324.
  121. *Kommunist*, 12 April 1923 quoted in *Nova Ukraina*, no. 6 (1923): 160.
  122. *Nova Ukraina*, no. 6 (1923): 160. On Ukrainian grain exports, see also *Bilshovyk*, 28 December 1922; *Nova Ukraina*, no. 4 (1923): 126.
  123. Edmondson, "Soviet Famine Relief," 317.
  124. *Bilshovyk*, 20 August 1922; Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 340.
  125. Batkis, "Rabota," 111.
  126. *Bilshovyk*, 17 August 1922.
  127. Fisher, *The Famine*, 427 ff; *Nova Ukraina*, no. 3 (1923): 151–2.
  128. Fisher, *The Famine*, 557.
  129. *Bilshovyk*, 14 November 1922.
  130. Poliakov, *Perekhod*, 27; M. Maksudov, "Pertes subies par la population de l'URSS 1918–1958," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, no. 3 (1977): 231.
  131. *Bilshovyk*, 17 December 1922: *Kommunisticheskaia partiia*, 406.

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133. Nakai, "Soviet Agricultural Policies," 61, gives one million; Veryha, "Famine in Ukraine," 285, gives three million for Ukraine and Crimea.

# CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF GENOCIDE AND ETHNOCIDE

*Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn*

## *Introduction*

We have been doing research on the history and sociology of genocide for several years. One of the results of this work is that we have become increasingly uncomfortable with the two concepts that are the topic of this article. The older of these two concepts, genocide, was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 as part of a campaign to have the community of nations recognize as a crime and outlaw the deliberate extermination of a group. From the beginning, the definition of the concept became subject to political considerations rather than scholarly ones. After the war, the French coined the second concept, ethnocide, to deal with the extermination of a culture that did not involve the physical extermination of the people.<sup>1</sup>

Increasingly, both terms have become "buzzwords" for several reasons: the acts that they were intended to describe are ordinarily committed by sovereign states, the same states that were asked to condemn and outlaw them. Since no states could be found willing to condemn themselves, the definition of the concept was distorted so that it would apply only to regimes that no longer exist or to regimes whose enemies were willing to accuse them of such outrageous crimes. This politicization of the concept might have been counteracted if there had been a large body of serious research based on a rigorous definition. Un-

fortunately, no such body of research exists up to the present time. Finally, the almost universal condemnation of Hitler and Nazi ideology after the end of the Second World War has attached a very broad negative connotation to any concept associated with the Nazi regime. Thus, the term 'genocide,' and to a lesser extent 'ethnocide,' is now frequently misused to condemn any policy or programme that one disagrees with, quite regardless of whether anybody has actually been killed or even persecuted. By the same political logic, the persecution and mass extermination of a group is not called 'genocide' by some if the perpetrator is a political ally or if the policy is directed toward ends with which one is in agreement.

For these reasons, these concepts have become almost useless in the context of scholarly research. Instead there is a need for concepts that are well-defined and refer to events that can be studied comparatively.

### *Ethnocide*

A number of authors treat ethnocide as synonymous with genocide. In our view, this practice leads to serious analytical confusion. For us, ethnocide is the deliberate attempt to destroy a culture *without* the intention of physically exterminating all of its members. The ethnocidal state usually builds its policies on the premise that the members of the victim group are worth sparing provided that their culture can be destroyed. The idea of salvage in ethnocide allows a variety of outcomes, ranging from total assimilation on the basis of equality to enslavement and the most brutal forms of economic exploitation. Lethal violence against persons is not essential to ethnocide. The ethnocidal state seeks to destroy the specific characteristics of a culture. While it may resort to killing community leaders and dissidents, its fundamental tools are government decrees banning religions, languages and/or institutions vital to the reproduction of the target culture.

The roots of ethnocide are buried deep in antiquity, but it became a prominent and vigorous part of the modern historical landscape, strengthened by the rise of the nation-state and the spread of nationalism. Ethnocide was practiced by the Romans in Britain, in the attacks on paganism in the Byzantine Empire, in the assault on the culture of Languedoc, in the offensive against Gaelic in Scotland and Ireland, and in the onslaught against Cherokee Indian culture in the United States—to cite just a few examples from several periods of history. While we recognize that there were certain cases in which ethnocidal policies were only the first step toward 'genocide,' this should not cause us to abandon the distinction between the two concepts.

Quite a few states have committed ethnocide, while only a few have moved on to genocide after their ethnocidal policies proved unsuccessful. Ambiguity about ethnocide may also arise from the fact that both ethnocide and 'genocide' carried out to implement a belief, theory, or ideology are encouraged by the nation-state's drive toward cultural and ideological homogeneity. But they are not the same policies and they rarely occur together. Thus, those who confuse them impede scholarly efforts to understand and explain them.

### *Mass Extermination*

While we are prepared to retain the word ethnocide in our vocabulary because we cannot think of a better term, we propose to substitute the term mass extermination for 'genocide.'

Mass extermination is defined as a mass murder committed with the intent to destroy physically a real or imaginary category of people, as defined by the perpetrator.

What is relevant here is the *intent* to destroy a whole group of people. The fact that there have almost always been survivors does not affect the definition; rather, it speaks to the imperfections of even the most sophisticated of human actions.

This approach has several virtues. It pinpoints the fact that we are not students of ethnocides—unless they were the prelude to mass exterminations intended to destroy an entire group. Moreover, it extricates us from another quagmire: the fact that many categories of persons consigned to mass destruction were inventions created by the persecuting state. Should we include the killings of large numbers of persons who were defined as belonging to imaginary groups within our field of study? We believe that we should. The issue comes into focus in the case of the great European witch persecutions which killed tens of thousands in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: an extraordinary campaign against a group of persons which did not exist. The work of Christina Lerner and Robert Muchembled strongly suggests that this was one of the first cases of ideologically-motivated mass extermination in history and the persecution was a consequence of attempts by new regimes to impose a new order or discipline on a recalcitrant population.<sup>2</sup> Although societies of witches never existed, it is essential that we study the campaign against them if we are to grasp the origins of ideologically-based mass extermination and its links with the rise of the nation-state.

We exclude from our research those relatively recent happenings and events that have been polemically associated with the term 'genocide.'



By defining our subject as the study of intentional mass extermination, we can set aside the debates over voluntary abortion and birth control, drug abuse treatment programmes, welfare and health care cutbacks, and the closing of churches and synagogues. These events merit scholarly attention, but they fall outside the boundaries of intentional mass extermination. We agree with Irving Louis Horowitz's argument that "Broadening the concept so that everyone ends up a victim of genocide only leads to tautological reasoning."<sup>3</sup> These recent abuses of the term 'genocide' for partisan purposes have trivialized the word and undermined its usefulness for serious research.

We are painfully aware of the fact that history is full of horrible events that also should be studied. But no light will be shed on them by lumping together what should be kept apart. Therefore, we are not dealing with war casualties, massacres, riots, disasters, epidemics, etc. This is not because these events do not touch us as human beings, but because scholarly and comparative research imposes its own discipline and requires considerable conceptual and methodological rigour if it is to lead anywhere at all.

### *The UN Convention on Genocide*

The broad scope of the United Nations' definition of genocide in the Convention of 1948 opened the door to some of the confusion evident in contemporary popular discourse. While the UN definition of acts of genocide began with "killing members of the group," it extended the list to include acts "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" and to acts "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group."<sup>4</sup> Written while the evidence of Nazi atrocities was freshly imprinted on the minds of the delegates, the UN representatives never meant to cover mental effects of racial discrimination, voluntary birth control programmes, or many of the other acts which are frequently called 'genocide' today.

In at least one crucial dimension, the UN definition of genocide is too narrow—it excludes political groups. Thus, one of the important categories of victims of mass extermination is not protected by the Convention. But then, it must be pointed out that this Convention has never yet protected any group.

Adopted by the General Assembly in the context of the Cold War and the struggle over colonialism, the Convention was the result of a political compromise between East and West. Soviet and Eastern European delegates to the UN strongly attacked the inclusion of political groups in the draft definition of the victims of genocide. They argued that the

Nazis slated whole populations for destruction so that they could re-settle their territory and that they exterminated political groups only because they constituted the intellectual elite of these peoples. The Communist bloc also maintained that extending the protection of the Convention to political groups—which were mutable and lacked objective distinguishing characteristics, according to the Polish delegation—would undermine the judicial rigour and enforceability of the Convention. On the other hand, the Eastern bloc delegates argued for the inclusion in the UN definition of genocide of “racial and national groups which constituted distinct, clearly determinable communities.”<sup>5</sup>

### *The Literature on Genocide*

While there is a considerable amount of descriptive material devoted to case studies of particular genocides, there are only a few authors who have analyzed genocide from a scholarly, comparative perspective. A small group of writers, taking up the challenge of Raphael Lemkin's work, have contributed to this literature. Lemkin's pioneering study of genocide published in 1944 established a definition of genocide which laid out the approximate boundaries of the concept and identified a number of specific historical events within its perimeter.<sup>6</sup> Lemkin defined genocide as the co-ordinated and planned destruction of a national, religious, racial or ethnic group by different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of the group with the aim of annihilating it physically or culturally. What we call ethnocide was a form of genocide in Lemkin's all-inclusive definition. Writing as news of the Nazi's depredations flooded his mind, Lemkin's definition of genocide included attacks on political and social institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion and the economic existence of the group. Acts directed against individuals because they were also members of a group came within his definition of genocide. These included killing the members of the group or the destruction of their personal security, liberty, health, and dignity.

Lemkin incorporated a three-part typology of genocide based on the intent of the perpetrator in his book *The Axis in Occupied Europe*. The aim of the first genocides—which he situated in antiquity and the Middle Ages—was a total or nearly total destruction of nations and groups. In the modern era, Lemkin argued, the dominant form of genocide was the destruction of a culture without an attempt to annihilate physically its bearers. Nazi genocide comprised the third type in Lemkin's analysis. It combined elements of ancient and modern genocide in a hybrid version characterized by the Nazi strategy which selected some

peoples and groups for extermination in the gas chambers and others for ethnocidal assimilation and Germanization.<sup>7</sup> What Lemkin did not realize was that twentieth-century genocide was increasingly becoming a case of the state physically liquidating a group of its own citizens. Had he paid more attention in his 1944 book to the case of the Armenian genocide of 1915 or the Nazi genocide of the German Jews, this facet of modern genocide might have played a more prominent role in his analysis.

For the next twenty-eight years, there was almost no scholarly comparative output on genocide. Then, in the next eleven years, seven authors produced several books and articles renewing serious theoretical discourse on the subject. Hervé Savon's typology, which appeared in his book *Du Cannibalisme au Génocide*, published in 1972, deals with genocides of substitution, devastation and elimination. These types of genocides take their meaning from the outcome of genocidal killings.<sup>8</sup> Savon's work fails to illuminate the events leading up to the genocide and the possible methods of interrupting the process.

In 1976, Irving Louis Horowitz tackled the subject in a short volume titled *Genocide* which he revised and reissued in 1980 under the title *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power*. As the new title suggests, Horowitz views genocide as a fundamental political policy employed by the state to assure conformity to its ideology and its theory of the state.

Starting from this perspective, Horowitz devises an eight-part typology of modern societies in which the level of the state-induced repression is the key variable.<sup>9</sup> Genocidal societies—defined as societies in which the state arbitrarily takes the lives of citizens who deviate from its ideology—occupy one extreme of the spectrum. Turkey in 1915 and modern Brazil are thus characterized. From genocidal societies, Horowitz's system takes up more authoritarian categories—deportation or incarceration societies, torture societies, and harassment societies—until they gradually shade into more liberal societies. Horowitz's typology is based primarily on twentieth-century cases. His unilinear approach, focused on outcomes, does little to explain the process whereby an authoritarian state resorts to genocide or to account for pre-twentieth century genocides. Moreover, as Horowitz himself candidly admits, a typology based on internal repression cannot explain by itself those genocides conducted in foreign countries. Yet, we cannot leave Horowitz without acknowledging that his discussion of the role of the state in genocide and his critique of the failure of modern social science to tackle the most pressing social issues of our day ring true.

Vakhan Dadrian, one of the first scholars to emphasize intent in the study of genocide, published a rather confusing typology about the

same time that Horowitz's book appeared. He posits five types of genocide: (1) cultural genocide, in which pre-emptive assimilation is the perpetrator's aim; (2) latent genocide, which is the result of activities with unintended consequences, such as civilian deaths during bombing raids or the accidental spread of disease during an invasion; (3) retributive genocide, designed to punish a segment of a minority which challenges a dominant group; (4) utilitarian genocide, putting mass killing at the service of economic exploitation; and (5) optimal genocide, characterized by the indiscriminate slaughter of members of a group to achieve its total obliteration. In the latter category, Dadrian locates the Armenian and the Jewish holocausts. Dadrian's lumping together of intended and unintended genocide serves to weaken the rigour of his typology. It seems to us that Dadrian has blended in his typology the motives of the perpetrators, unintended outcomes, ethnocide, and non-genocidal, though murderous, punitive expeditions. We learned a great deal from his discussion of the importance of perpetrator intent, but have not been able to use his typology effectively in our work.<sup>10</sup>

Helen Fein included two thoughtful pages on types of genocides in her 1979 book on the Holocaust, *Accounting for Genocide*.<sup>11</sup> Before the rise of the nation-state, Fein argues, there were two types of genocide: genocides intended to eliminate converts to another faith and genocides designed to exterminate other tribes because they could not be subdued or assimilated. The nation-state has given birth to three new types of genocide in her view: in the first, the state commits mass extermination to legitimate the existence of the state as the vehicle for the destiny of the dominant group; in the second, the state kills to eliminate an aboriginal group blocking its expansion or development; and, in the third, the state reacts without premeditation to rebellion by subordinated classes by totally eliminating a rival or potential elite.

Understandably, there are omissions and gaps in Fein's typology, which is only incidental to her major task. She does not provide a place for mass exterminations intended to instill terror in others to facilitate conquest or for mass killings for economic enrichment. These are categories that we have found helpful in our own work.

Jack Nusan Porter published last year an anthology on *Genocide and Human Rights* which we found useful although it deals only with twentieth-century cases. In his introduction, he struggles with the problem of definition along lines similar to ours, although he does not go so far as to reject the use of the term 'genocide'.<sup>12</sup>

Leo Kuper has contributed more to the comparative study of the overall problem of genocide than any scholar since Raphael Lemkin. In his 1981 monograph on the subject, Kuper wrestles with the problems of genocidal process and motivation. His discussion of past genocides

clusters the motives of the perpetrator around three categories: (1) genocides designed to resolve religious, racial, and ethnic differences; (2) genocides intended to terrorize a people conquered by a colonizing empire; and (3) genocides perpetrated to enforce or fulfill a political ideology.<sup>13</sup> Kuper is particularly concerned with the increasing frequency of genocidal events in the modern period. Since modern genocides occur within nation-states that have the character of plural societies, the creation of new plural societies during the period of colonization and decolonization becomes of particular significance for his analysis. Under the heading of "related atrocities," Kuper discusses two groups that are excluded under the UN definition of genocide.<sup>14</sup> These are the victims of mass political slaughter and attempts to decimate an economic class. He examines three sets of exterminations in this category: in Stalin's Soviet Union, the devastation of the peasants, the party elite, and the ethnic minorities; in Indonesia, the slaughter of communists in 1965; and in Cambodia, the mass murders of the Kampuchean government led by the Khmer Rouge. Kuper concludes that each of these cases would have been labelled genocide if political groups had been protected by the UN Convention.

In examining a large number of cases, Kuper insists on the need to refer to specific conditions in each case. He does not think that it is possible to write in general terms about the genocidal process. "The only valid approach would be to set up a typology of genocides" and to analyze the genocidal process in each type and under specific conditions.<sup>15</sup>

As we agree that this is the most promising approach, we now present here our attempt at such a typology.

### *A Typology of Mass Extermination*

Since intent is a crucial part of our definition, it must also be the basis of our typology. We propose to classify mass exterminations in the terms of those committed (1) to eliminate the threat from a rival, (2) to create terror, (3) to acquire economic wealth, and (4) to implement a theory or ideology. In looking at actual cases, the motives tend to be more complex than such a relatively simple scheme allows for; therefore, cases are assigned to one of these types on the basis of what we consider to have been the dominant intent. Because our interest is both historical and comparative, we propose to make this presentation a historical one.

We do not know when the first 'genocide' occurred. It seems unlikely that early man engaged in 'genocide' during the hunting and gathering stage. While we have no direct evidence, this seems a reasonable as-



sumption because men lived in quite small groups and overall population densities were extremely low (one per 10km<sup>2</sup> of habitable terrain).<sup>16</sup>

After the development of agriculture, the world divided into nomads and settlers, and systematic conflict started in the form of food raiding by the nomads. But again, it seems very unlikely that anything approaching 'genocide' occurred. The nomads quickly learned to raid their settled neighbours at harvest time for their food store, but they had no interest in exterminating them because they planned to repeat their raids in subsequent years. The settlers may have had much better reason to do away with the nomads, but they had neither the means nor the skills to do so.

When trade developed, the scene changed dramatically. Conflicts arose over trade and trade routes. Wars were fought over the access to wealth and over the control of the transportation network—to use a modern term. At first, these conflicts were probably in the nature of brigandry and robbery. Soon they escalated to wars between states. However, these warring peoples soon discovered that their victories were mostly temporary: the defeated peoples withdrew long enough to rebuild their resources and their armies and then tried to recoup their losses and to avenge their defeat. This pattern became so common that someone decided that the only way to ensure a stable future was to eliminate the defeated enemy once and for all. Those that were not killed in battle were sold into slavery and dispersed. This elimination of a potential future *threat* appears to be the reason for the first 'genocides' in history. They seem to have been common throughout antiquity, especially in the Middle East where trade routes between Asia, Africa and Europe crossed. The Assyrians were very good at it; concerning some of the people they vanquished we know little but their names.<sup>17</sup> When the empire of the Hittites was destroyed, it was done so efficiently that we did not even know the location of their capital until an inspired German archeologist unearthed it almost by accident.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the best-known example of this type of mass extermination is the destruction of Carthage.<sup>19</sup> The so-called Punic Wars between Carthage and Rome lasted well over a century and involved control over the Mediterranean trade and economy. These wars were very costly in terms of material and lives—even by modern standards. After Rome just barely won the Third Punic War, it decided that Carthage had to be eliminated once and for all. Those who were not killed were sold into slavery and the city was destroyed.

The second type of mass extermination is one committed primarily for *economic* reasons. It probably also originated in antiquity. People looking for greater wealth than their own world provided, found it in the

possession of others. When this wealth was in the form of natural resources, it could not be carried off as loot; it could only be occupied, and the indigenous population was enslaved and/or exterminated. This type of mass extermination has continued to occur throughout history to our present day. It has often been associated with colonial expansion and the discovery of new parts of the world. The Tasmanians<sup>20</sup> disappeared in the same way that some of the peoples of the interior of Brazil are disappearing today.<sup>21</sup>

The third type of mass extermination was a somewhat later invention and was associated with the building and maintaining of empire. To conquer others and to keep them subjugated requires large armies and a permanent investment in a large occupying force. It is probably Genghis Khan who should be credited with the realization that the creation of *terror* is far more efficient.<sup>22</sup> He offered his prospective conquests a choice of submission or extermination. If they did not submit, the threat was ruthlessly carried out. Although there were never more than one million Mongols, he established by these methods an empire that comprised the then known world from China to Central Europe.

The fourth type of mass extermination is a much more modern invention and its intent seems much more irrational: it is meant to deal with a pseudo-conspiracy by a group defined by the perpetrator and arising out of a particular *theory, belief or ideology*. While its antecedents can already be seen in the witch-hunts of the Middle Ages, it saw its full development only in the twentieth century. We are all familiar with the horrors committed in Ottoman Turkey,<sup>23</sup> Nazi Germany,<sup>24</sup> and Stalin's Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup> What is different about this fourth type of mass extermination is its result: for the first three types it can be argued that they produced tangible benefits for the perpetrators; for the fourth type it seems clear that it was carried out in spite of tremendous costs to the perpetrators—costs that can be measured in economic, political and developmental terms.

*A Note on Methods* The definition of concepts and the design of a typology are an essential part of any research enterprise. However, they are essential only in making sense of the data. In the study of genocide or mass extermination, the data present a set of particularly difficult problems. This is not the occasion for exploring these problems in detail. However, we propose to conclude this paper by at least mentioning the four kinds of problems that make such study particularly difficult:

1. The evidence is by its very nature difficult to obtain because throughout most of history relevant records either were not kept or did not survive;

2. Where records do exist, they either originate with the perpetrators or with the victims, but rarely do we find records for both;
3. When we do have records from the perpetrators and the victims, they are often so divergent that it is difficult to decide what actually did occur, and the intentions of the perpetrator may be the most difficult evidence to discover; and
4. The reliability of the records presents another problem, especially in the pre-modern period. Thus, we have evidence for genocides that occurred but were not reported; but we also have those that were reported, but never occurred.

### *Conclusion*

We have tried to develop a conceptual and typological basis for scholarly research on 'genocide' from a historical and comparative perspective. The role of intent is central to our definition and our typology.

The first three categories in our typology are of primarily historical interest; modern states are generally too large to be liquidated by mass extermination. This is demonstrated by the man-made famine of the early 1930s in Ukraine.

Considering the inaccessibility of the archives of the USSR, it will probably remain impossible to document the intent of the perpetrator. But whatever the actual intent, it would have been impossible to implement the mass extermination of the entire Ukrainian population. In terms of our typology, we think that the case of the Ukrainian famine is a rather late occurrence of type two, where the intent is to terrorize a people conquered by a colonizing power. It seems to have achieved this aim, albeit at enormous cost in human lives and suffering.

Instances of the first three types are now likely to occur only when involving quite small groups of people, such as the Amazonian Indians. Our fourth type is continuing to play a prominent part in our century, and it is likely to recur in the absence of meaningful means of prevention.

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